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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

THE REAL SMOKING GUN

Ever since "smoking guns" entered the discourse of journalistic investigation, the press has focused more on the weapon than on the crime. When Walter Mondale cited evidence, contained in an article by Patrick J. Sloyan in last week's *Nation*, that President Reagan had rejected a recommendation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to pull the marines out of their Beirut barracks in advance of the airport attack a year ago, he meant to criticize the Administration's entire policy in Lebanon. The article had provided that critical context, but the barrage of charges and denials subsequently launched by both the Democratic and Republican campaign staffs, through the press, has obscured the pre-eminent point: the policy was mistaken and disastrous, and the unheeded recommendation was merely a byproduct of its failure.

We stand by Sloyan's story. Using every trick in the political spokesman's book, Administration officials have tried to explain away the fact that a serious disagreement between the Joint Chiefs and the National Security Council was decided in favor of the White House wing for political reasons, and that hundreds of lives were lost as a result. But the press should not let the President get away with his version of the details.

Another smoking gun surfaced in the candidates' debate: the terror-and-torture manual produced by the C.I.A. for its *contra* commandos in and around Nicaragua. Again, the news media remained content to concentrate on the particular instrument rather than the political program it served—the massive campaign of terrorism Reagan directs in Central America. If the press widened its view, if it shifted its focus from figure to ground, it would see that there are more important issues at stake than a single shot on a narrow range.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS
Richard Falk
Roger Wilkins

THE G.M. SETTLEMENT
David Bensman

DOWN ON THE FARM
Heather Ball
Leland Beatty

ASAT DEBATE
Jeffrey Kessel

VAN GOGH IN ARLES
Arthur C. Danto

'KIPLING'
Paul Berman

A MAN AND A MOVEMENT

THE AGE OF REAGANISM

ANDREW KOPKIND

Not since the era of the late junior Senator from Wisconsin has an American political figure given this country an eponymous ism. Reaganism is now an established movement and an important historical event. Its roots can be discerned in periods long past, and its consequences will carry beyond the Presidential tenure, and perhaps the earthly existence, of the man who gave it a name. In the coming few years, at least, it will surely engage and dramatically alter the institutions and activities of American civic culture.

Like other native American movements—Populism, Progressivism and the various "new radicalisms" of this century—Reaganism lacks sharp ideological definition and programmatic coherence. It has not yet produced a unitary creed to resolve the differences among its components: the Moral Majority, the corporate class, blue-collar ethnics and the country-club set. The contest between monetarists and supply-siders is still undecided. Reaganism seems vague, trendy, spontaneous, opportunistic, impressionistic and contradictory. But not always: those who are making the movement have a precise idea of their goals and a fair sense of the strategies to achieve them. They have located a social base to support their campaign; they have developed an institutional network to maintain it; they are fashioning an economic system to feed it; and they have invented educational policies to supply it with manpower for generations to come. However amorphous any of those elements may look at the moment, the whole Reaganist project has the spin, the feel, the significance of a force of history.

The rise of Reaganism is focused in the electoral arena this year, but it is not primarily a

(*Continued on Page 448*)

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LETTERS.

GOOD BUT BIASED

New York City

I salute the excellent special issue of September 29, "Fifteen Years of the Burger Court," and the choice of Herman Schwartz as guest editor. However, I couldn't help but notice that of the contributors only one was black, and he was solicited to write on racial aspects of the Court's decisions, while the only women were asked to write jointly one article on sex discrimination rulings of the Court. All other contributors were white males.

I note this bias because in 1984, while all is certainly not equal regarding opportunities for women and people of color in this country, we can proudly claim experts of both genders and all races in the areas of law and political science.

There is no doubt that the esteemed gentlemen who contributed their knowledge to the issue are some of the leading experts of the day. But there are other experts of diverse background and experience who have only been deemed such in the last decade. If one wants them, one has only to look.

Joan L. Washington
Center for Constitutional Rights

SCHWARTZ REPLIES

Washington

The point is well taken. We tried to get a more diverse set of contributors, but we obviously didn't try hard enough. Next time we will do better. *Herman Schwartz*

THE WORLD AWAITS

Zurich

A publication such as *The Nation* ought to stop referring to the deployment of nuclear missiles with first-strike capability as "a reckless game" played by Washington and Moscow [editorial, "East Meets West," Sept. 22]. Rather, it should help us understand the pattern of U.S. action and Soviet response that has propelled the arms race since 1945, so that we can most effectively act to reverse the policies now threatening to annihilate us.

. . . As Christopher Hitchens wrote in *The Nation*, "A real agreement would, in some sense, represent a defeat" for the United States, even though some high Administration officials privately admitted their opposition to the deployments ["Minority Report," Oct. 22, 1983]. Yet the deployments proceeded despite the democratic will of the people in the countries affected. As it had warned, the Soviet Union followed with countermeasures.

One need not love the Soviet Union or its nuclear arsenal to recognize that it would be suicidal for the U.S.S.R. to sit back quietly as the United States, with its strategy of "limited, protracted, winnable nuclear war," gains the upper hand. When President Reagan jokes about bombing the Russians and publicly proclaims that "We will put an end to Communism as a sad and bizarre chapter of history," can the Russians be expected unilaterally to lay down their arms?

The editorial missed an important point in its enthusiasm over the "growing rapprochement between the two Germanys": the fear throughout Europe, more pronounced in the East where the most damage by World War II was done, of a united Germany. Given the lingering memories of fascism and the recent wave of revanchism in West Germany, it should be clear why Archbishop Josef Glemp and Giulio Andreotti are alarmed.

We all stand to gain from détente. But rather than talking about "the superpowers' insistence on monolithic blocs in their respective spheres" or about Eastern European countries making "a separate détente" with the West or singling out the German Democratic Republic, why not talk about real détente that could help defuse tensions for all countries? It could begin with any number of steps that would contribute to preventing nuclear war: a nuclear freeze, a no-first-use policy, a test-ban treaty, the prevention of an arms race in space and the banning of chemical weapons, among a host of other disarmament resolutions being considered at the United Nations.

An examination of the record shows that the U.S. voting pattern on these questions gets worse every year. There is still time to let Jeane Kirkpatrick know that the U.S. vote is being watched, and that the American people will not sit back quietly as its government obstructs, very often alone, progress toward disarmament and détente. The whole world is waiting. *Janet Bruin*

K.A.L. 007 FOLLOW-UP

Because of the importance of adding to the record on the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, from time to time we will publish correspondence, commentary and refinements re David Pearson's August 18-25 article, "K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It."
—The Editors

A NOTE

New Haven

In the article, I cited "a variety of theories [that] have attempted to explain . . . K.A.L. 007's deviation from course." Some of the material refuting those theories and establishing that the airliner in all likelihood "made a deliberate, carefully planned intrusion into Soviet territory" was drawn from a research report by Capt. Robert W. Allardyce, a commercial pilot, navigator and air crash investigator. Allardyce compiled his report in preparation for a book on the Flight 007 incident and its aftermath. As I was under the impression that he was not yet ready to go public, I did not credit his report in my article. I am now pleased, as are *The Nation*'s editors, to acknowledge Captain Allardyce's work.

David Pearson

UPDATE

In his *New York Times* column of October 21, "Silence on Flight 007," Tom Wicker followed up on his September 7 column about David Pearson's article. "Up to now," Wicker pointed out, "no official or agency of the Reagan Administration has offered any reply whatsoever to The Nation's article. . . . If not refuted, those findings can mean only one thing: that a warning from U.S. security agencies might have saved Flight 007 and the 269 persons aboard."

On October 25, The Nation Institute, with the Public Media Center of San Francisco, took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* calling on the national press and Congress to begin their own investigations "to discover exactly what happened, when, and who made the decisions." The Nation Institute hopes to inaugurate a fund to support further research into the K.A.L. episode.

CORRECTIONS

The correct name of the Army Security Agency, to which Pearson referred on page 116 of the article, is the Army Intelligence and Security Command. The command's listening post at Sakata, on Honshu Island, also mentioned on that page, has not been in operation for several years. Lieut. Col. William Birdseye of Army Public Affairs would not tell us if any other military or intelligence agency now operates an installation on Honshu. Finally, the third listening post on Okinawa maintained by the Naval Security Group is located at Futemna, which was misspelled.

MEETING

On Wednesday, October 31, the New York West Side and East Side Sane Nuclear Policy Committees sponsored A Re-evaluation of the K.A.L. 007 Incident, featuring David Pearson and John Keppel, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer.

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EDITORIALS.

Now, We Begin

The Presidential campaign now mercifully drawing to a close seems more like a dull and draining bout with the flu than an inspiriting clash of issues and ideas. For a contest fraught with such historic importance, it might have been different. At the very least, Walter Mondale should have been moved to define a coherent, progressive program for foreign affairs, national defense, social equity and economic development. Ronald Reagan should have been prodded harder to disclose his vision of an imperial, authoritarian, militaristic, divided America. Instead, the candidates filled the debate halls with rehearsed remarks, empty phrases and poor jokes.

Even if the wildest fantasies of the Mondale-Ferraro campaign come true and the history of 1948 repeats itself, the conservative counterrevolution Reagan helped shape and now leads will not suddenly disappear. The political sensibility of the country has shifted so radically in the past several years that a mere change of parties in the White House would not automatically reverse the ideological tide. Mondale enthusiasts should remember that the present political direction was prefigured by the sharp turn toward cold-war-

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making and social retrenchment taken by the Carter-Mondale Administration midway in its term. Nothing Mondale has said or done since suggests he is ready for an about-face, though his criticism of Reagan's failure to negotiate on arms control with the Russians was a welcome quarter-turn.

But a ringing Reagan triumph would surely make matters worse. As Andrew Kopkind outlines in the cover article of this issue, Reaganism is more than a package of Republican policies wrapped in patriotic rhetoric; it is an ideology, and its time has come. For that reason and because of Mondale's more enlightened domestic policies, we urge *Nation* readers and the larger liberal community to vote against Reaganism next Tuesday: not only for the top of the ticket but for progressive candidates in the thousands of state and local contests. Getting out the vote is a way of organizing an opposition. After that, there will be different strategies to explore: building local liberal coalitions for off-year elections, forging protest and solidarity groups when the likely foreign adventures are launched, working within private institutions (unions, colleges, industries) to oppose the ravages of Reaganism. The radio and television advertisements say that the hard work of democracy is over and that the last act—voting—is easy. In fact, the hard work is about to begin.

The Big Issues

A few weeks ago, some Brown University undergraduates conceived of a unique antiwar statement: a student referendum calling on their campus infirmary to obtain a supply of suicide pills to be made available in the event of nuclear war. That morbid dramatization of resignation summons up memories of the gruesome finale at Jonestown. It also underscores the Mondale-Ferraro ticket's failure to offer voters an alternative to the Administration's dangerous policies.

Sure, Mondale is an arms control enthusiast who wants calmer relations with Moscow, promises to cancel the MX missile and B-1 bomber and proposes a somewhat lower rate of increase in defense spending. But what kind of alternative is offered by a candidate who endorses the Grenada invasion, proposes a quarantine of Nicaragua if the Sandinista government doesn't play politics by our rules, argues in favor of a conventional arms buildup and keeps quiet about world poverty, the Palestinian plight and our network of commitments to repressive leaders around the world? A Mondale Presidency would mean an array of new weapons programs, interventionary diplomacy and nuclear weapons as a continued fact of life. And it could be considerably worse. What would a cold war liberal like Mondale do if the Sandinistas defied his quarantine or if El Salvador "fell" to the rebels or if some friendly dictator got in trouble? It would be imprudent not to assume, given Mondale's record, his advisers and the social forces now ascendant, that his Administration wouldn't employ force rather than acknowledge "defeat" or suffer international humiliation.

Furthermore, if he wins a second term, Reagan is not necessarily going to be a wilder version of himself, as liberals ritually insist. The Republicans may decide that they have little to gain by becoming involved in lost causes in Central America and elsewhere. In Lebanon, Reagan showed he can back down without flinching and without suffering much loss of popularity. Politics isn't fair. Carter would have been savaged for presiding over such a debacle. There are intimations, admittedly faint, that a re-elected Reagan would move to reconstruct Soviet-American relations along more moderate lines. With an economic downturn likely by 1988, conservatives' best hope for staying in power would be to revive the Nixonian claim that they can handle the arms race and superpower relations better than their rivals.

We should not dismiss out of hand Reagan's reassurances of his devotion to peace, any more than we should take it on faith that a Mondale Presidency would live up to the candidate's constructive platform and campaign promises. The issue is whether Presidential leadership has much latitude in the area of national security. The military sectors of the state and their economic and ideological allies exert a powerful influence on policy, effectively precluding a serious discussion of foreign policy alternatives by candidates of either party. Until we face the issue of statist dominance, our relationship to government will more closely resemble that of subjects than of citizens.

It is difficult to make a case for supporting Mondale on foreign policy grounds. Noam Chomsky has argued that we should support Mondale because of the fundamentalist overtones of Reagan's leadership; on balance, though, Reagan is more opportunist than fundamentalist, especially on foreign policy. Recently, without identifying Reagan as the speaker, I read to my class at Princeton his speech before the U.N. General Assembly and asked them to tell me who had delivered it. Their first guess was Gandhi. Next came Woodrow Wilson. One might also ask whether Reagan's "opening" to the religious right (and that is all it is) is more dangerous than a Mondale Administration's need to prove its credibility to the Pentagon.

Of greater concern is Reagan's peculiar form of leadership. He manages to combine staggering ineptitude with a kind of blind insistence on firmness. Such a combination is alarming. The Reagan Administration has not faced a genuine crisis thus far. If it should, two kinds of dangers could emerge. Either it could overrespond and set off a war, or an "invisible" decision-maker hidden from scrutiny, in effect, Reagan's ventriloquist, could take over. Reagan's style of leadership is crucial, and it presents us with a clear choice between him and Mondale.

I intend to vote for Mondale and Ferraro. On civil liberties, social welfare, judicial appointments and compassion, the Democrats are preferable. Also, it is important to deny Reagan a Republican majority in Congress and to prevent the Reagan hard-liners from receiving a landslide.

Those who share my pessimism about Mondale's foreign policy views might say that it is irresponsible to vote at all. If party politics and the electoral process no longer can offer voters an alternative to interventionary diplomacy and nuclearism, we must seek to revitalize representative democracy so that it does provide a choice. If it is indeed impra-

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tical to challenge directly the destructive tendencies of U.S. foreign policy, then we do live in a sort of Jonestown, and a huge stockpile of suicide pills is needed after all.

RICHARD FALK

Richard Falk, a member of The Nation*'s editorial board, is Albert G. Milbank Professor of international law and practice at Princeton University.*

Smiling Racism

Pundits have offered a variety of explanations for Ronald Reagan's enduring popularity, but none of them encompass the whole truth. There is one explanation, though, that is rarely written about in the press or even discussed in polite company. Reagan's dirty little secret is that he has found a way to make racism palatable and politically potent again.

That his policies are not only unfair but also demonstrably racist is crystal clear. Early in the 1980 campaign when he spoke in Philadelphia, Mississippi, he sent out a signal. In the town where civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner were murdered by Klansmen in 1964, Reagan told the South that he favored states' rights. When it was pointed out that he was glorifying a principle that had been used to fight the drive for civil rights, Reagan used the gambit that would become a trademark of his Presidency. He said that his words hadn't meant what they surely conveyed.

There is no need to recapitulate Reagan's civil rights record. It is enough to note two of the strongest signals he has sent out: support for tax exemptions for schools that discriminate on the basis of race, and opposition to busing and affirmative action. For Reagan, the facts don't matter, only the message does. Campaigning for Jesse Helms earlier this fall in Charlotte, North Carolina, he proclaimed that busing does not work. No matter that the experience of the city in which he was speaking directly contradicted him. *The Charlotte Observer* promptly published a stinging editorial pointing out his error and rebuking him for sullying an accomplishment of which the city is justly proud, but the message of where Reagan stood had already been flashed around the country on the nightly news shows.

Besides symbolically expressing a hostility to the aspirations of black people, Reagan has waged a cruel and successful war on their pocketbooks. True, his Administration's policies have hurt all poor people, without regard to color: the top 60 percent of Americans have benefited, while the bottom 40 percent have suffered. But blacks have been hurt the most. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently reported that "the average black family in every income strata—from the poor to the affluent—suffered a decline in its disposable income and standard of living since 1980"; that the hardest hit were black families in which one parent works and the other takes care of the children, losing an average of more than $2,000 in disposable income from 1980 to 1984; that the poverty rate among blacks is almost 36 percent, the highest since 1968; and that while long-term unemployment among whites has increased 1.5 percent since 1980, among blacks it has increased by a whopping 72 percent.

For white audiences Reagan takes the rough edge off his policies by the adroit use of "photo opportunities." A few years ago, after reading that a cross was burned on the lawn of a black family in suburban Maryland, he helicoptered out to the house, with the White House press corps in tow, to say what a bad thing it was. Recently, he and Nancy Reagan went by motorcade along Martin Luther King Boulevard in southeast Washington to dine with the family of a black second-grade student with whom he had been corresponding. After he had shared a chicken dinner and delivered his gifts of jelly beans and tickets to the Jackson Victory Tour concert that night, Reagan posed for pictures with the boy and his parents. It was another example of Reagan's technique of denying the undeniable in order to dupe the gullible. How can a man who shows such concern and consorts so easily with blacks be a racist? It was a shrewd way of sending the message that unremitting opposition to the true interests of black people doesn't make one a mean racist.

Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post*, one of the few journalists who has written about the political effectiveness of Reagan's approach, recently interviewed Merle Black, a political scientist at the University of North Carolina. After discussing several studies indicating that racism motivates some people to become Republicans, Black told Johnson:

> Race is very important, and especially for today's students. They've been to desegregated schools, and they've had some experience with affirmative action programs and they do not like them. Every one of them has a friend who didn't get into UNC who had higher board scores than blacks who did get in here. So a lot of their experience has made them very sensitive to racial things, and when Reagan comes out and says the things he says, boy, they like that.
>
> Reagan's kind of civilized the racial issue. He's taken what [Alabama Gov. George C.] Wallace never could do and made it acceptable. It fits in with their sense of perceived injustice, with what they see as the status of being a white person not being as high as it was 15, 20 or 30 years ago.

For the most part, Americans don't want to admit that they are racists and they certainly don't want to tell that to political journalists or pollsters, as Tom Bradley's sad experience in the California gubernatorial race demonstrated. So Reagan has unleashed an invisible monster on American politics in a way that makes him virtually unassailable.

Southern politicians used to promise their redneck constituents that they would "keep the niggers in their place," and when elected, they proceeded to do just that. It has been reported that after losing an early election to just such a politician, George Wallace vowed never to be "outniggered" again. Well, it is clear that Ronald Reagan is not going to be "outcolored."

ROGER WILKINS

Roger Wilkins is a member of The Nation*'s editorial board and a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.*

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

It takes a little time for a word or a phrase to acquire the opposite meaning. Nobody can trace the evolution of the term "prestigious," for example. It used to mean "spurious" or "meretricious," but now, especially as applied to silly book prizes or shallow magazines like *The Economist*, it connotes eminence or even praiseworthiness. Romeo died because he could love only one woman, yet all reckless philanderers are called Romeos. King Canute went to some trouble and risk to show that it was futile to try to hold back the waves, yet we honor his memory by calling Canute all those who actually try to hold back the waves with a straight face. And so on.

"Deficit" is the latest word to evolve into its own contradiction. It means, if it means anything, the difference between what is spent and what is earned. Or, if you prefer, the difference between what is raised in revenue and what is committed in Federal outlays. As employed by the pious Walter Mondale, it suggests some loose or immoral attitude toward the national housekeeping. About this we are supposed to feel bad. We are supposed to feel bad, in particular, on behalf of our children. Leave aside the absurdity of a Democrat calling for fiscal continence on this scale, and consider the following.

In at least one of the first three years of the Reagan Administration, more than half of the 250 largest and most profitable corporations paid no Federal income tax. Over that period, the profits of just 128 of those companies totaled $57.1 billion. Seventeen unusually fortunate companies avoided paying tax in all three years, while showing profits of $14.9 billion. Particularly witty in this respect was General Electric, which reaped $6.5 billion in pretax profits over the same three years, paid no Federal income tax and claimed $283 million in refunds on taxes paid over the three years before Reagan took office. Music hall definitions of "chutzpah" are useless here, and at a time when social programs are being pruned in the name of a balanced budget, they aren't even funny.

I tip my hat to Citizens for Tax Justice, which has done the necessary spadework. It has found that in 1983, 129 of the most profitable corporations paid taxes at rates far lower than the 12 percent visited on the average working stiff—Joe or Jane Blow, you or me, or what you will. In fact, if the 250 most successful companies had paid at the statutory corporate tax rate, they would have contributed $31.8 billion more in 1983 alone.

The picture sharpens appreciably when the focus is narrowed a bit. Citizens for Tax Justice also conducted a study of eleven of the top twelve military contractors—it compassionately excludes Hughes Aircraft, which is privately held and thus need not even report its profits. Six of them registered huge profits in the years 1981, 1982 and 1983, but paid no income tax. Four of those had an even greater laugh on the rest of us by getting tax refunds and other breaks. Grumman and Lockheed paid no Federal taxes for three years, and General Dynamics, General Electric, Tenneco and Boeing copped refunds. Last year alone, those six companies took $25.8 billion in Pentagon contracts.

The average tax rate of those eleven companies was 1.5 percent. This on a total of $19 billion in profits in the three years under review. The deficit, then, is not the difference between what America spends and what America earns; it is, to a striking extent, the difference between what the rich owe and what the rich pay. General Electric, the firm that launched Ronald Reagan as a television idol, avoids paying a fortune in taxes. This conflict of interest makes John Zaccaro look like Francis of Assisi. But the individualist ethos is apparently so strong that we notice clever dealing only when it is done by single persons; preferably persons without a dime who can be accused of chiseling on their food stamps. Even Mondale prefers to attack George Bush for his exorbitant tax breaks rather than criticize institutional and corporate delinquency.

While we're on the subject of terms that take on opposite meanings, what about "risk capital"? The military contractors who feed off the Pentagon—and thus, in a brilliant exercise of double dipping, feed off the tax money that the rest of us pay—have constructed a special loophole for themselves. It is called the completed-contract method. Under the hilarious provisions of this "method," a weapons manufacturer need not declare income from Defense Department sources until the contract is completed. I would like to have been present at the meeting where this scheme was first brought up: "Will they buy it?" "Sure, why not? They've swallowed everything else." A firm that succeeds in renewing its Pentagon contract (and we know how this, too, can be arranged) may look forward to an indefinite tax holiday. Where is the risk? The featherbedding and subsidy are enough in themselves, without any leniency from the I.R.S., to guarantee a soft life to the most vagrant bum of a corporation.

The risk, though, does exist, even if not for capital. By subsidizing and nourishing the huge manufacturers of destructive technology, we add a little extra momentum to the arms race and we build-in costly disincentives to its reversal. Here is a special interest worthy of the name: it fleeces the common treasury, battens on our uncovenanted generosity and presses the instruments of suicide and genocide into the hands of an unelected elite which is only too eager to try them out. Not content with this, it expects tax-exempt status as though it were a charity or a religious institution. We end up working, and we saddle the next generation with our debts. If only that was all.

* * *

In the course of the lyrical shamble down the Pacific Coast Highway with which he closed his remarks at the debate in Kansas City, the President was musing horribly on the nuclear issue. He allowed himself to wonder what people would make of us in one hundred years, and said, "They will know whether we used those weapons or not." Well, they won't if we do, will they? Presumably, this peroration had been rehearsed in the White House. Apparently, the old fool doesn't have an adviser on the future.

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CALVIN TRILLIN

I didn't fully understand the difficulties facing Americans who try to run their families the way the White House is run until our family considered instituting a line-of-the-day policy.

"I don't see why we have to do it just because the White House does it," my older daughter said when I introduced the subject at breakfast one morning. "Does that mean we also have to find somebody's harbor to mine?"

I had to admit that our family has not often sensed a parallel between our operations and those of the White House. It's true that in the early weeks of the Reagan Administration, when there was a lot of talk that highly efficient staff work spared the President the burden of knowing what day it was, I posted a Table of Organization chart of the family next to the breakfast table. After a while, though, I found it dispiriting to come down to breakfast every morning and see my name listed off to the side, so I got rid of the chart. I assume the President has taken down the one in the White House by now for the same reason.

It's also true that several years ago I publicly revealed what seemed to be a remarkable overlap in the operations of our family and those of the Carter White House: casting around for a way to define their Administration, the Carter people came up with a motto, A New Foundation, that we had already rejected during a search that eventually resulted in our family's adopting the motto Zip Up Your Jacket. That, I suspect, is the moment commentators have in mind when they say that at some point in the Carter Administration it became clear that Jimmy Carter was not exercising firm leadership of the American people. I might just add, by the way, that Carter would almost certainly have emerged in better shape from what is widely considered his most serious mistake in the 1980 Presidential campaign debates—relating a discussion that he and his daughter, Amy, had about nuclear arms control—if he had ended the story by saying, "So I told my little daughter, Amy, 'Zip up your jacket.'"

Ronald Reagan seemed to be encouraging families to identify with the problems of the White House when, asked why American diplomats had moved into the embassy annex in Beirut before the construction of security devices had been completed, he said that anybody who has ever had a kitchen renovated knows that installation is never finished when it's supposed to be. At first, I didn't see how that applied to our family, since our kitchen is no longer being renovated. We managed to end the renovation in the late 1960s by employing a device we got from the Senate rather than the White House. Adapting the wise and lamentably ignored plan that Senator George Aiken had just put forward for ending the war in Vietnam, we declared ourselves victorious, even though a neutral observer might have concluded otherwise, and the contractor withdrew his troops. By chance, though, when the President made his comments about the Beirut embassy, the Palmers down the street were lacking only the delivery of their new restaurant-model six-burner stove and the sanding of their new butcher-block counters; sure enough, they returned from a weekend camping trip one Sunday night to find that a Moslem fanatic had suicide-bombed their kitchen. That's when I decided I'd better look into the possibility of our family having a line of the day.

I had learned about the line of the day from an article by Mark Hertsgaard in *The Village Voice*. Michael Deaver, the White House deputy chief of staff, told Hertsgaard that at an 8:15 meeting every morning, a line of the day is devised "to make sure we're all saying the same thing." After the meeting, another participant said, spokesmen throughout the government are told, "Here's what we're going to say; everybody say it at once. I don't care if you're asked the question or not." For instance, the line of the day might be "Far from being insulated by his aides, the President is out on the campaign trail fielding any questions the people want to ask." If so, spokesmen talk about the President's willingness to be grilled even if they are asked completely unrelated questions: whether the President still seems to be under the impression that Polaris is a denture cleanser, say, or whether it's true that the man most often mentioned around the White House for the next Supreme Court vacancy is best known in his hometown for his firm belief that he is in direct daily communication with the spirit of Frederick Barbarossa. (The President has, in fact, taken a number of questions lately, although usually from student audiences—first, Republican college students; then, high-school students; then, grade-school students. So far, he hasn't taken on a play group, but if the scheduling continues in the direction it's going, one question the President may find himself fielding before the campaign's over is "Can I go make tinkle?")

I wish I knew how Deaver gets everybody to agree to say the same thing. We had a terrible time at our house. The closest thing I could think of to a family's having its own line of the day was the custom of a friend of ours named Quinn, who, during a period of cash-flow problems, always answered the telephone by saying, "The check's in the mail"—which, by chance, is pretty close to what the White House's line of the day has been on what's being done about the deficit. My daughters wanted us to answer all questions by saying, "The snow is already fourteen inches deep, with drifts up to three feet." If enough people heard that enough times, they figured, school might be called off even though the temperature outside was 72 degrees.

Then the telephone rang. My wife answered. "It's the woman from Diners Club," she whispered, handing me the phone. "Tell her that the check's in the mail."

"Tell her the snow's already fourteen inches deep," my younger daughter said.

"Do you realize how quickly your credit rating can deteriorate?" the woman from Diners Club asked.

"Zip up your jacket," I replied.

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ARTICLES.

RANK-AND-FILE DOUBTS

The Downside of The G.M. Contract

DAVID BENSMAN

Business Week called it "The Right Kind of Auto Contract," and the rest of the media concurred: the United Automobile Workers' agreement with General Motors means there will be no disruptive national strike, that workers' wage increases will be modest enough to allow G.M. to sustain its competitive position in the world automobile industry and that employees facing layoffs will be protected, while the company maintains the flexibility it needs to boost productivity. But the contract settlement has a darker side, which the media largely ignored. All over the country, U.A.W. members have voiced frustration with what they view as their leaders' failure to win adequate guarantees of job security or to regain what was lost in the concessionary settlement of 1982.

Such contradictory responses are hardly surprising. When bargaining began, union members were furious with a company that had extracted painful concessions one year and had awarded managers $181.7 million in bonuses the next, that had assigned 70,000 full-time jobs' worth of overtime when 51,000 auto workers were still laid off and that was planning, according to a memorandum by G.M. vice president Alfred Warren, to eliminate as many as 100,000 jobs in the near future. Restraining unionists so sorely provoked would not be easy, especially when news reports indicated that the company was raking in record profits.

But G.M. threatened to step up plans to produce parts and even whole cars overseas if U.A.W. leaders caved in to rank-and-file demands for a rich contract. Then there was the political angle. Fearing the public would blame Walter Mondale for their intransigence, the union's leaders did not want to strike this fall. They also worried that a prolonged strike could undermine Congressional support for the U.A.W.-backed domestic-content legislation, and could even embolden President Reagan to call for a halt to the "voluntary" export restraints that were extracted from the Japanese and that currently protect the jobs of hundreds of thousands of American auto workers.

The fact that under such circumstances U.A.W. negotiators were able to fashion an agreement acceptable to management and to 57.7 percent of union members may indeed be the remarkable achievement hailed by the media. But the margin of ratification, fifteen percentage points, is very low by the union's standards: until the concessionary agreement of 1982, U.A.W. national contracts traditionally carried by at least seventy percentage points.

There is probably even less support for the contract than the narrow margin suggests. John Lukes, recording secretary of Buick Local 599 in Flint, Michigan, the union's largest G.M. local, reports that members attending an informational meeting prior to the vote vociferously denounced the contract. A week later, the local voted to ratify, 65 percent to 35 percent. As Lukes sees it, members thought they had no alternative. "No one thought G.M. would give more without a long strike, and we knew our leadership didn't want a long strike," he says.

The 1984 contract contains pioneering job-security provisions, wage and pension improvements, early-retirement sweeteners, establishment of a child-care pilot program (for the first time in a national auto contract), elimination of some unpopular penalties for absenteeism, extension of the guaranteed-income program for employees with long seniority, continuation of profit-sharing, establishment of a $100 million fund for job-creating ventures and much more (the U.A.W.'s summary of the contract ran twenty-four pages). Even so, many workers are deeply disappointed with both the job-security clauses and the wage package.

At the heart of the job-security proposal is a job bank to which G.M. agreed to contribute up to $1 billion over six years. Workers with at least one year's seniority who are laid off because of technological improvements or subcontracting of parts will be selected by committees composed of union and management representatives to train for future work in the auto industry, fill in for others receiving training or perform new jobs. Workers will receive their former wages, and selection will continue until G.M.'s $1 billion is exhausted.

One member of the U.A.W.'s research staff predicted that the company would use the job bank to train 4,000 workers at any given time. After acquiring versatility, they would be assigned to fill jobs opened up by retirements and resignations. If attrition runs at a normal rate, and 45,000 to 50,000 workers resign or retire by the end of the six-year period, the job bank would help the union preserve the jobs of just about all those displaced.

The provision provoked intense controversy during the ratification period, partly because of its complexity. Brian Mitchell, president of the local at G.M.'s foundry in Danville, Illinois, believes many local presidents took no position on the contract because they did not understand how the job bank would work. Another worker, normally a loyalist, told me that G.M. executives could take the proposal and "shove it up their ass." When I repeated to him the U.A.W. research department's rationale for the job bank, he responded, "That's a pretty good argument. We sure never heard that here."

The job bank, however, does not protect those laid off because of reductions in the company's sales volume or because of decisions to produce or buy cars overseas and sell

David Bensman, associate professor of labor studies at Rutgers University, is writing a book with Roberta Lynch about the decline of the steel industry in Chicago, to be published by McGraw-Hill.

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them in the United States under the G.M. label. Sales are impossible to forecast, but the U.A.W. research department staff member I spoke with predicted that by the end of 1987, the weakening of trade restraints will enable G.M. to import 400,000 cars a year, which translates to a loss of 22,000 jobs.

The company's refusal to rule out decisions to produce or buy cars overseas drew the most praise in the business press and the most criticism within the union. Pete Kelley, the only member of the U.A.W. negotiating committee to oppose the agreement, charges that the contract provides no job security and leaves the company free to shift its production wherever it chooses. Kelley says the union should have offered to take smaller wage increases in exchange for a shorter workweek and work year, and fatter pensions to stimulate early retirement. Mitchell has a more typical reaction: the job bank does not give employees the security they expected to get, but trade restraints, not collective bargaining, provide workers their best hope for job security. "It's got to come from legislation," he says.

The contract's wage package was equally controversial. First, despite G.M.'s record profits, workers will get smaller raises than they had prior to 1982. Instead of the 3 percent "annual improvement factor" the U.A.W. achieved twenty years ago to insure that workers would share in the company's productivity gains, the current contract provides for a 2.25 percent wage boost in the first year. In the next two years, employees will receive "performance bonuses." These lump-sum payments will not become part of the basic wage rate at G.M., nor will they be counted in vacation pay and other benefits that are computed as a proportion of hourly wage rates.

Second, the union was forced to abandon its tradition of minimizing pay differentials among its members. In the first year, the increase in the hourly wage rate of die designers will be more than four times higher than that of floor sweepers. G.M. negotiators argued that the discrepancy was necessary because new technology was placing greater demands on highly skilled workers; U.A.W. negotiators went along because those workers have been increasingly angry about management's attempts to blur craft distinctions: for example, its insistence that electricians also weld and operate heavy equipment. Unionists in the lower wage classifications are, naturally, displeased with a first-year increase of just 9 cents an hour.

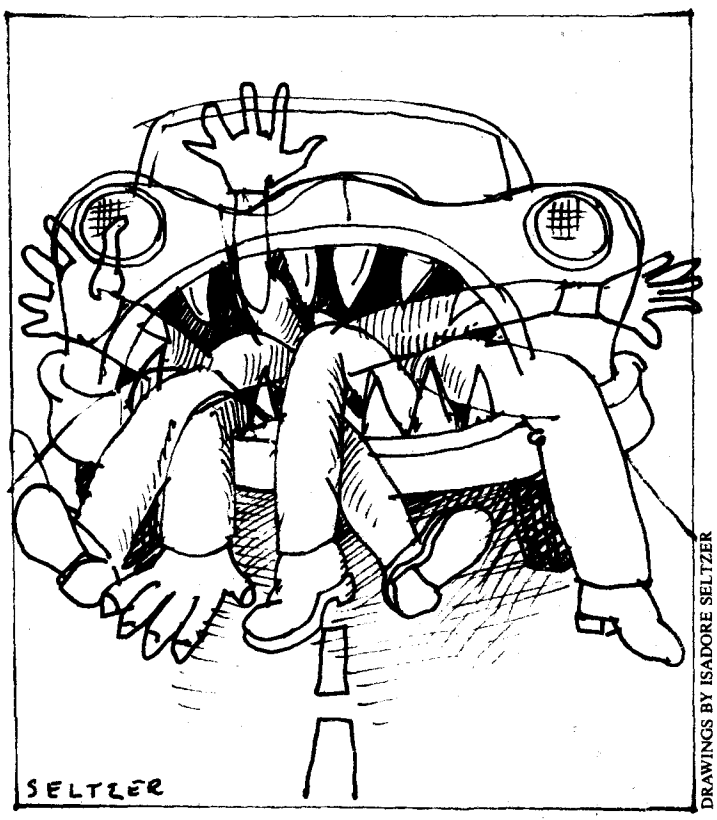
Third, while the union thwarted G.M.'s efforts to revamp the cost-of-living formula, it did accept a one-time cut in cost-of-living adjustments. Negotiators accepted a 13-cents-an-hour deduction from those adjustments to pay for some of the improved benefits in the contract without raising employment costs above the limit the company insisted on.

Pensions were raised 30 percent over three years, to $1,205 a month, which, U.A.W. staff members proudly point out, is well above what most Americans receive. But even the pact's defenders, like Brian Mitchell, are disappointed that the union wasn't able to gain an automatic cost-of-living adjustment for pension benefits.

One member of the union's research department estimates that G.M.'s overall labor costs will increase 21 percent over three years, compared with 35 percent in contracts that contained the annual improvement factor. Given the altered economic climate, the difference may not seem unreasonable, but there are signs that troubles lie ahead for both company and union.

During the ratification period, workers picked up on a provision that seems minor: a dues increase. While the lump-sum payments to be granted in the second and third year will not figure in vacation pay, they will count as wages when membership dues are deducted from an employee's paycheck. For the first time in U.A.W. history, a dues increase was negotiated with the boss rather than voted by the union's convention delegates. Although the sum involved is paltry, union members were furious, and for a few days it seemed they might even reject the contract. Ultimately, the U.A.W. International's efforts to explain the contract to unionists throughout the country, as well as union president Owen Bieber's threat that members would immediately go on strike if they rejected the contract, turned the tide.

The anger at the contractual dues increase reflects the rank and file's growing frustration with the union's inability to curb company abuses. Although G.M. decides to shift work outside the bargaining unit, to rely on overtime or to force relaxation of work rules, members are displacing a good deal of their resentment for those practices on the union. That explains why so many incumbent U.A.W. local leaders were defeated in last spring's elections. And it at least partially explains why so many of the newly elected union leaders were afraid to support the proposed G.M. agreement.



DRAWINGS BY ISADORE SELTZER

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Veteran labor journalist B.J. Widick says that dissatisfaction with the agreement will also endanger labor-management efforts to forge a "cooperative relationship" through programs, loosely modeled on Japanese quality circles, in which workers meet with management to make suggestions and discuss how to improve their work. "Quality-of-worklife programs will go down the tubes," Widick predicted. "By outsmarting the U.A.W., G.M. will create troubles for itself."

Other observers are more cautious in their predictions. "Quality-of-worklife programs may not get the publicity they once did," John Lukes argues, "but as for the long-term impact on the union, it's too soon to tell." Joe Finkbeiner, a union activist working at the *Lansing Labor News*, disagrees. He says that Bieber's threat not to resume negotiations with G.M. hurt him politically but thinks the ratification fight "in the long run will be positive because it will make the leadership talk to the members more."

As corporations use their ability to move capital around the world to force workers to reduce their expectations and increase production, unions face an ever more difficult task. The United Automobile Workers, with its politically skillful leaders, creative professional staff and sophisticated membership, is better equipped to meet the challenge than most other unions. Nevertheless, as the negotiations with G.M. revealed, it's hard to protect workers' interests in an unfavorable political and economic environment. And within five years, there will be 80,000 fewer union members at General Motors.

Today as auto workers return to the assembly lines, G.M. executives return to their board rooms to plan the worldwide operations that will get rid of workers' jobs. If the U.A.W. is to make any headway in this difficult situation before the next contracts come up, the International's leaders must first win back the trust of the rank and file. □

FOOTNOTE ON AN HISTORIC CASE: IN RE ALGER HISS

This just-published booklet by author William A. Reuben identifies 114 factual errors in the Federal District Court of New York's 1982 decision upholding Hiss's conviction for perjury in 1950. This flawed decision, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1983, stands as the last legal word on one of the most celebrated cases in modern history. 1 copy $5, 10 copies $40, 50 copies $150, 100 copies $250. Make checks payable to The Nation Institute and send to "Hiss," The Nation Institute, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

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THE DEBT TORNADO

Blowing Away the Family Farmer

HEATHER BALL AND LELAND BEATTY

The specter of foreclosure is haunting America's independent family farmers. That staple scene of nineteenth-century melodrama—the villainous banker demanding the mortgage payment on the old homestead—was revived in modern dress in the recent movie *Country*, with a bland bureaucrat from the Federal Farmer's Home Administration replacing the miserly Banker Jones. The forces threatening the thousands of real-life counterparts of Gil and Jewell Ivy, the couple facing eviction in *Country*, are more abstract and impersonal than the film suggests. The villains are policies of the Federal government that encouraged people like the Ivys to go into debt and then made it impossible for them to pay off that debt.

According to Emanuel Melichar, senior economist at the Federal Reserve Board, more than one-third of America's commercial farmers are in serious financial trouble, and unless real interest rates come down and debts are rescheduled, many of them will go under. An American Bankers Association survey conducted in 1983 found that 17 percent of farmers with outstanding loans would be unable to make their payments this year. For the first time in history, the total amount of interest payments on farm loans had surpassed the total net farm income. Under Reagan, real interest rates—the average rate minus the rate of inflation—have been the highest in the century.

The debt crisis has fallen most heavily on middle-level farmers, those with gross annual sales of between $40,000 and $500,000. During the 1970s, the number of operators in this category increased by 250 percent. Some of the increase was due to inflation, which raised prices dramatically, but

Heather Ball, a policy economist, and Leland Beatty, a policy analyst, work for the Texas Department of Agriculture.

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its primary cause was the Federal government's efforts to encourage production for overseas markets. In 1973, Washington sought to counteract ballooning U.S. trade deficits caused by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' oil embargo by expanding agricultural sales abroad.

Generous subsidies to overseas purchasers through loans from the Commodity Credit Corporation, an undervalued dollar and broad extension of credit to foreign governments by large commercial banks spurred a leap in U.S. farm exports from $8 billion in 1971 to $43.8 billion in 1981. Major purchasers included Poland, Argentina, Mexico and Brazil; all four bought grain on easy credit terms. In the 1980s these monetary and fiscal policies were suddenly reversed, as the international financial community realized debtor nations could not possibly repay their loans without severely cutting back on imports. The International Monetary Fund imposed austerity programs that turned off the tap on money to buy U.S. farm commodities.

In addition, an overvalued dollar due to high U.S. interest rates imposed a 32 percent surcharge on all U.S. exports, according to the 1984 "Economic Report of the President." As a result, agricultural exports dropped more than 20 percent between 1981 and 1983, and real prices on major commodities dropped 21 percent.

The family farmer is bearing the cost of the new policies in the form of low prices, high interest rates and plummeting land values. There has also been a dramatic shift in the structure of farming. "Superfarms," those with annual sales of more than $500,000, account for 25 percent of the total farm output in America, even though they constitute only 1 percent of all agricultural units. According to the Farm Credit System (F.C.S.), if the trend continues, superfarms will make up 6 percent of all farm units by 1995 and will produce more than 75 percent of all farm products.

F.C.S. studies make clear that net farm income will never reach the level of any year in the 1970s. The Department of Agriculture forecasts steadily declining crop prices through the decade.

Unless this direction is reversed, medium-size operators will be squeezed out of business "like toothpaste out of a tube," as a leading agricultural economist put it. They will be replaced by large spreads owned by wealthy investors looking for tax shelters, or by high-equity farmers who want to expand their holdings.

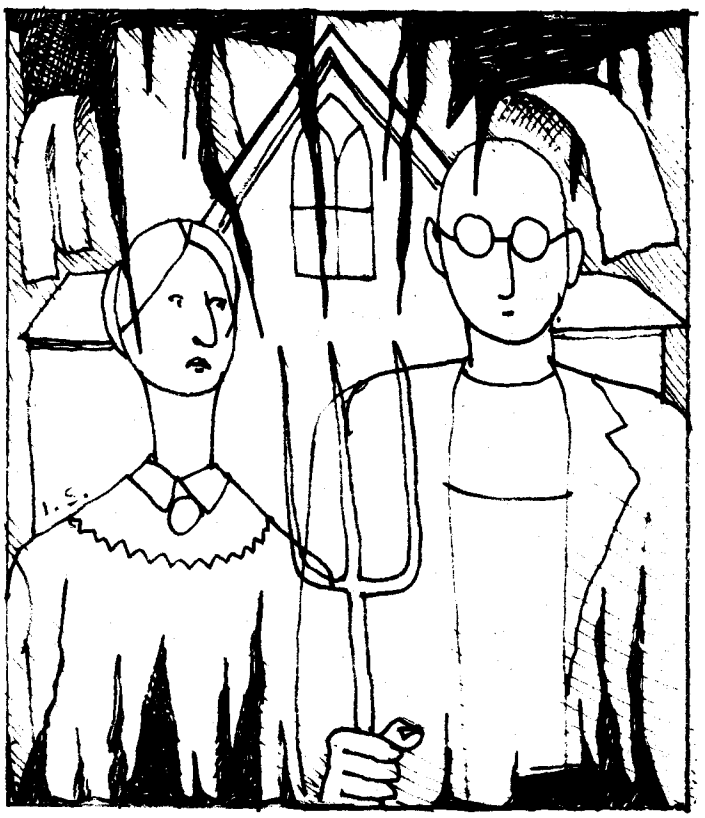
If agriculture were an industry that had resisted innovation and showed declining productivity, perhaps an argument could be made for allowing uncontrolled market forces to clear out the deadwood. But America's decentralized, commercial family farm system is the most successful in the world. Farmers utilize the latest technology, lead the nation in productivity gains and maintain a global competitive advantage, despite the punishing effects of an overvalued dollar.

There is more at stake than economic efficiency, though. A recent study of Nebraska farmers by Larry Swanson, an economist at the University of Nebraska, concluded that if family farms continue to fail at the present rate, rural communities will deteriorate. Agriculture and family farmers in particular are the lifeblood of rural communities. They patronize local stores, have their equipment serviced at local shops and send their children to local schools. If the trend continues toward fewer, larger farms producing an increasing share of our food and fiber—and claiming an even larger share of farm income—school enrollments will decline by 15 percent, one out of every ten retail stores will close and the labor force will shrink by 7 percent before the decade is out. Many small towns will disappear.

The financial cost of widespread farm failures could be enormous: as much as $100 billion in uncollected loans and business losses. Not only will indebted commercial farmers go under, so will the rural businesses that depend on them. Agricultural banks have already quadrupled their standard loan loss rate (a measure of the reserves they maintain in anticipation of bad debts).

The present policies also encourage wasteful farming practices that do irreparable harm to the soil. Farmers burdened by debts cannot afford to take advantage of tax credits or low-interest loans for soil and water conservation. They have to plant fencerow to fencerow in a desperate effort not to fall further behind in their payments. Unless their debt problems are addressed, they cannot practice careful stewardship of the land.

A new Federal farm policy is needed to undo some of the damage caused by the government's massive shift in direction over the past decade, without bringing back the ruinous overproduction-at-any-cost policy of the early 1970s. A long-term solution, as opposed to a golden Band-Aid, would link farm policy to the fiscal and monetary environment in which American farmers operate. The expansive decade of the 1970s is over and will not return in the foreseeable future. There must be a restructuring of family



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farmers' debts so that they can bring their agricultural practices in harmony with the foreign and domestic economic realities of the 1980s.

A rational farm program would enable commercial family farmers to produce for actual world need at prices that cover the cost of production. Superfarms should be moved to the back of the line for government support programs. Congress must rewrite the tax code so that it rewards farmers for working the land, not the tax system. We are heirs to a family farm system that is the most productive, innovative and efficient in the world. We owe it to future generations to preserve it. □

A LAND TORN APART

Costa Ricans Want The *Contras* Out

MERCEDES LYNN DE URIARTE

San José, Costa Rica

The social fabric of this small nation, once called "the Switzerland of Central America" and considered a democratic role model for its neighbors, is coming unraveled. The presence of anti-Sandinista forces along the border with Nicaragua has become a divisive political issue, pitting citizens who contend they violate Costa Rica's traditional neutrality against those who dislike the government in Managua and support efforts to undermine it.

Many sophisticated Costa Ricans worry that their country has become a pawn of U.S. foreign policy in the region. "Two years ago, I would never have believed things could come to such a state," an intellectual told me. He admits that he routinely carries a gun, as do most of his friends. "We do not want the Honduran situation here," he said, referring to the economic and military burden that country bears. "We are being pushed into it by U.S. regional strategy and by the *contra* activity here which is strongly supported by the Reagan Administration."

The foreign military presence in Costa Rica has mushroomed in recent months, generating a wave of protests. Costa Rica, which disbanded its armed forces thirty-five years ago, now finds its northern borders crowded by armed members of the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (Arde), a U.S.-backed *contra* organization. On September 5, Edén Pastora Gómez, the charismatic hero of the 1979 Sandinista revolution who now opposes the Nicaraguan government, reportedly mended the rift between him and Alfonso Robelo Callejas. Arde had split into two factions after Pastora opposed Robelo's ties with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (F.D.N.), the C.I.A.-supported, Honduran-based *contra* group composed largely of former Somocistas. Pastora's move solidified the alliance Robelo recently drew up between Arde and the F.D.N. The alliance has enhanced the capability for pincers actions against Nicaragua from Honduras and Costa Rica.

Unification of the anti-Sandinista forces had long been sought by the outspoken U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Curtin Winsor Jr. Two months before Pastora's move, Winsor said, "I would look positively on the coming together as a process that would make for a unified democratic opposition, which would lend the F.D.N. the political legitimacy of Arde."

Many Costa Ricans oppose the use of their country as a *contra* base. In July, according to the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs, more than 30,000 of them marched in a parade calling for continued neutrality. According to a recent opinion poll, 83 percent of the population opposes the creation of an army.

Despite the protests, the *contra* buildup here continues openly. Front-page stories in major publications detail their movements. In an exclusive men's club in San José, elegantly dressed businessmen compare strategies and boast of the financial and material aid they have given the anti-Sandinista fighters.

On September 9, in response to complaints from his constituents, Congressman Ricardo Rodríguez Solórzano, of the Legislative Assembly, took out a full-page advertisement in *La Nación*, a leading Costa Rican daily, in the form of an open letter to President Luis Alberto Monge. Rodríguez provided extensive details on *contra* operations, bases and supplies and cited the growing popular opposition to their presence. He wrote:

> It is not the political stability of the Sandinista government that concerns me, nor that it finds itself more menaced by these groups of counterrevolutionaries. The Sandinista leaders will know how to defend their government. It is Costa Rica's democratic regime that worries me. It is the one most severely endangered if mercenaries that once served the most shameful and terrible dictatorships in Latin America are allowed to group and arm themselves in our territory. At any given moment their guns could overturn our democracy, our institutions and laws, if our freedoms and respect for the sovereignty of other nations are perceived as a hindrance to their muddy objectives.

According to Rodríguez, *contras* are camped in the national parks along the Interamerican Highway. The government has increased the number of Civil Guard stations along the route. Storekeepers in small northern towns like La Cruz talk about the *contras*' shopping preferences. Groups of able-bodied young men, whom residents say are not townspeople, stand idly about in village plazas.

Costa Rican newspapers are now advertising positions at a new radio station, intended to counter Sandinista broadcasts, which are received more clearly in towns just over the border than are those originating in San José. This is controversial because the country's neutrality proclamation

Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte, a 1982-83 Alicia Patterson Fellow and Los Angeles Times *staff writer, covers Latino issues. She also teaches part time at the U.C.L.A. Latin American Studies Center. She has just returned from Central America.*

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forbids "nonpublic wireless installations aimed at communicating with warring factions" from operating in Costa Rica. An unusual agreement between the United States Information Agency and a private group of Costa Rican business leaders—organized last December as the Costa Rican Association for Information and Culture (A.C.I.C.)—will permit Voice of America programs to be relayed from the new station. Voice of America agreements are generally made between the United States and foreign governments, but the Costa Rican Radio Law prohibits foreigners from broadcasting in the country. To circumvent this constraint, the agreement was signed with A.C.I.C., which will relay Voice of America broadcasts from Washington.

The pact aroused so much controversy in the Legislative Assembly that its signing was postponed three times. On August 31, when it was formalized at the home of President Monge, no Costa Rican official signed. Under the contract, the U.S.I.A. agreed to pay $150,000 for Costa Rican frequency rights, in addition to annual operating costs of $168,000. Furthermore, the agency is providing as much as $2 million worth of equipment for the new station, which will operate at 50,000 watts—the greatest amount of power allowed stations in the United States.

Costa Rica has vacillated about how to handle the *contras* since they began setting up bases here about four years ago. Pastora, a Costa Rican landowner, has been expelled from the country several times by the Monge government because of his activities against Nicaragua. But he has always been allowed to return.

Many Costa Ricans, however, regard economic decline as a far greater threat than Nicaragua. Government studies show that Costa Rica's economic situation has deteriorated steadily since 1980. Its foreign debt is more than $4 billion; 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty level, almost twice as many as in 1981; 20 percent of the work force is unemployed; and child malnutrition has reached epidemic proportions.

"The economic situation is critical," says Sam Stone, who heads the Center for Political and Administrative Investigation and Training (CIAPA), a respected Costa Rican think tank. "For the first time in my more than forty-five years here, homes are being broken into and nothing is taken but food."

According to Stone, who once served as Costa Rica's cultural attaché to France and as a representative to Unesco:

> The Soviet threat was not originally a factor here. It was brought about by lack of an overall U.S. regional policy.
>
> In the past century, for example, the United States, France and England were interested in this area and southern Mexico only in terms of access to an interocean canal. They saw the region as a bunch of banana republics, only important when crisis came. Then, all of a sudden, everyone in Washington rushed about. Even now, often the first thing they do is pull out a map.
>
> U.S. regional policy has always been a hit-and-miss proposition. A roving ambassador is occasionally sent down for a few hours—sometimes never leaving the airport where he meets with a few people. As a result, U.S. policy often shows a complete lack of understanding. □

STAR WARS' OPENING GUN

What You Should Know About ASATs

JEFFREY KESSEL

Despite a barrage of criticism from the Democrats, funding for President Reagan's antisatellite weapon (ASAT) program squeaked through Congress. Although only $2 billion was appropriated for fiscal 1985, the momentum has begun and it can be expected to accelerate in future budgets as these new weapons systems develop their own constituencies.

Under political pressure,the Administration has agreed to talk about a ban on ASATs with the Russians, but in the meantime it is testing a novel antisatellite weapon. Given this situation, an antisatellite weapons race between the superpowers has begun. Such a competition could lead to a war in space that would be a prelude, not an alternative, to nuclear war on earth.

Satellites are crucial because they are used to verify treaty compliance. They allow each side to watch the movements of the other and gauge its objectives. If hostilities break out, the slender hope of peace will rest on information provided by satellites. However, they also have an ominous side, since the information they provide increases the effectiveness of weapons.

While people who favor nuclear arms control are generally aware of the threat posed by ASATs, they should be informed of the Administration's arguments in favor of them and the array of expert views in opposition. What follows are statements of the Administration's positions (in italics) paired with distillations of expert views. They were drawn primarily from a report summarizing views expressed at a workshop sponsored by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment and from testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Adm. Noel Gayler, retired; Richard Garwin, a physicist at I.B.M. and a defense consultant to the government; and Kurt Gottfried, a physicist at Cornell University.

Because the United States enjoys technological superiority over the Soviet Union, it can win an ASAT race and cause severe stress to the Soviet economy.

A continued ASAT race would divert vast sums of money and resources from other civilian and military projects. As in previous arms races (development of the hydrogen bomb, the intercontinental ballistic missile, the submarine-launched missile, the multiple-warhead missile and the cruise missile), one side or the other might gain a momentary military advantage, in a narrow sense, but the cycle of response and counterresponse would lead to ever greater in-

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stability and diminished security. In the absence of an ASAT treaty, both sides would increase the variety and effectiveness of their antisatellite weapons. The offense would have the advantage in a contest between an antisatellite weapon and a satellite, which is only incidentally equipped with defensive capabilities, such as maneuverability. That would provide a strong motivation for striking first against the other side's satellites, before they could be used to direct an attack.

In a period of unrestrained development of ASATs, tensions would be at a higher pitch, and mistakes more likely. In 1975, the United States thought its early-warning satellites had been attacked by Soviet lasers; in fact the satellites had recorded the heat radiation from a Soviet gas pipeline fire. Were this to happen in the hairtrigger atmosphere of a world armed with antisatellite weapons, national leaders might feel compelled to respond quickly with a "counterattack" and ask questions later.

A system for ballistic missile defense (BMD) would usher in a world in which the United States is free from nuclear threats, protected by a variety of new technologies that will render enemy missiles impotent and obsolete. A treaty on antisatellite weapons cannot be allowed to impede the development of BMD.

The most telling argument against a BMD system is that its development would be seriously destabilizing and destined to failure. Its technical difficulties are exceeded only by its provocative nature. Confronted with America's development of a BMD system, the Soviet Union would increase its offensive forces to overwhelm that system. It is far cheaper and surer to build more missiles than to develop untried schemes to destroy thousands of attacking missiles carrying tens of thousands of independently targetable bombs, each capable of destroying a city.

ASAT and BMD systems and technologies are closely related. Development of certain missile defense systems would make an ASAT treaty more difficult to implement, and would violate the existing antiballistic missile treaty. Limiting the development of antisatellite weapons would limit BMD development.

Also, a ballistic missile defense system could be developed under the guise of testing antisatellite weapons. The SALT I Treaty prohibits the deployment of BMD systems but does not mention ASAT development. Since the two technologies overlap, this loophole could be exploited to develop both systems simultaneously.

The Russians already have ASATs, so the United States must catch up. We must also be able to deter Soviet attacks on our satellites by threatening a response in kind. Finally, we need this weapons system as a bargaining chip in future negotiations.

Neither the existing Soviet system nor the developing U.S. system poses a serious threat to the other side at present. The Soviet system is cumbersome (launched by a booster rocket longer than three school buses) and suitable only for use against satellites in low orbits. The United States is developing and is about to test a more flexible system consisting of a small rocket launched from an F-15. This missile could eventually be fitted with a booster rocket to enable it to attack satellites in high orbits. Because of the U.S. system's small size there would be no way for the Soviet Union to verify the number deployed. Every F-15 would be a potential ASAT launcher, since the rocket could be attached in about six hours. If one side has catching up to do, it is the Soviet Union.

It is not necessary to have ASAT capability to deter an attack on one's satellites. The capability to respond against terrestrial targets would be just as effective a deterrent. However, the United States could best deter attacks against its satellites by diversifying and hardening them and by supplementing satellite communication with links on the ground.

The 50,000-plus strategic nuclear weapons on this planet stand as a mute refutation to the bargaining-chip argument. Bargaining chips have a way of becoming permanent, and they stimulate both sides to develop better weapons—the next generation of bargaining chips.

If the United States is free to develop low-altitude ASATs in order to catch up with the Soviet Union, then a ban on ASATs that are effective against high-altitude satellites is acceptable.

This variant of the catch-up argument ignores the fact that because the majority of Soviet satellites fly in lower or-

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bits than do their U.S. counterparts, the probability that the Russians would accept such an offer is zero. Furthermore, certain low-altitude ASATs could be adapted to attack high-altitude satellites, as could many proposed BMD systems.

A treaty banning antisatellite weapons is impossible to verify.

While it is true that a treaty cannot guarantee that a country does not *possess* ASATs, especially small ones, a treaty banning their *testing* in space is verifiable. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have the technical means to confirm that the other side is not testing antisatellite weapons in space. Without such testing, neither side could be sure of the capability and reliability of its weapons. A ban against testing, even with no further agreements concerning existing weapons, would preserve the status quo, insuring that both sides' satellites are not at risk.

Any ASAT ban would be ineffective because the Russians will always have a residual capability. For example, their ABM system around Moscow (permitted by the ABM treaty, as is a system around Washington, which has not been built) could be converted to an antisatellite defense system. Furthermore, the Soviet Union could secretly develop a system and then break the treaty, confronting the United States with a formidable ASAT capability.

Although no arms control treaty can eliminate a country's potential for developing antisatellite weapons, the risks of living without a treaty are far greater than the minimal risks remaining after a treaty is signed. Covert experiments (without testing in space) cannot result in developing, much less deploying, a reliable ASAT system. Furthermore, by diversifying satellite functions and incorporating defensive capabilities, the United States could insure that its satellites remain protected under a treaty banning space testing of ASATs.

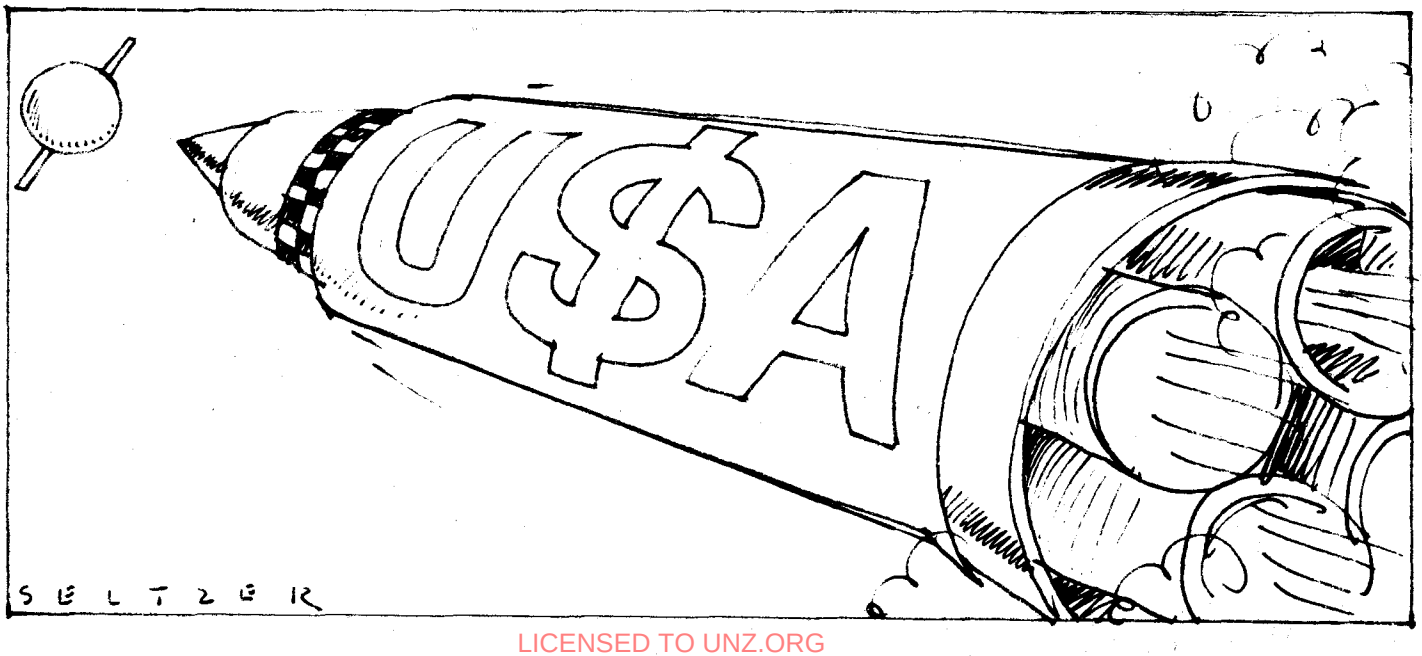
The Russians cheat on treaties and therefore it is too risky to negotiate with them.

Although allegations of Soviet duplicity may be widely accepted by the public, the detailed charges provided by the Administration cannot stand up under close scrutiny. (The same can be said for the Soviet Union's charges of U.S. treaty violations.) In the May issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Jozef Goldblatt of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute examines the charges made by both sides. He concludes that none of them are significant and that each side seems intent on making propaganda by accusing the other of violating provisions of the treaties that are vague. A treaty banning the testing in space of antisatellite weapons would be readily verifiable by both parties to the treaty, and thus preclude cheating.

The Soviet Union walked out of the talks on intermediate-range weapons (I.N.F.) in Europe. The United States must not reward such behavior by offering to negotiate on other nuclear weapons issues. Negotiations on ASATs must be linked to concurrent discussions of other nuclear weapons.

Agreement on a weapons treaty is extremely difficult. The chances of such agreement are increased by narrowing the scope of the treaty. Including intermediate-range missiles in the negotiations would destroy the chance of achieving a verifiable ban against testing in space, since the I.N.F. talks were at an impasse and complicated by strong political differences within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Rewarding behavior or determining fault in the history of I.N.F. weapons in Europe is not the immediate issue. What is paramount is stopping ASAT development before it gets out of control.

A world without a treaty banning the testing of antisatellite weapons would be an increasingly dangerous one. Rising tensions could touch off a war in space that could lead to a nuclear exchange on earth. A world with such a treaty would be far more stable and safe. There would be breathing room in which to negotiate additional treaties on other types of weapons. □



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Reaganism

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

phenomenon of political campaigns, public office or even Republican Administrations. A landslide victory for Reagan and his allies next week would certainly advance the movement, but a good Democratic showing would not stop or reverse it. For power is already in place to continue the movement's mission in the coming years. The first targets of choice are clear: all those liberal institutions that have defined and shaped American culture for fifty years or more—the press, the churches, unions, academia, local public education, urban government, philanthropic foundations, the artistic establishment, Hollywood, publishing, Federal service, the liberal professions and their organizations. They will come under increasing pressure to redirect their orientation along lines that have already been drawn, to change their social roles, to reassess their values. Even the term "liberalism" has been dropped from polite political discourse. A major ideological conflict is under way.

It's not necessary to establish a conspiracy or identify a cabal to confirm the reality of Reaganism. The course of the movement may be directed, as an editor of *The Times* of London once said of his paper's editorial policy, "by a committee that never meets." Actually, subcommittees do meet: the Madison Club of right-wing strategists in Washington, working groups of religious leaders and their political associates, forums of economists, military experts and foreign affairs specialists. But the degree of self-consciousness is less significant than the amount of motivation the movers and shakers possess. And anyway, a committee of conspirators with a published *nomenklatura* would offer too easy a target for critics eager to personify the enemy.

Reaganism underscores the issues and subsumes the symbols of the electoral debate. Grenada, Central America, the Pentagon budget, taxes and deficits, school prayer, abortion, family values, patriotism, leadership—those words have specific referents, and in an ordinary campaign they would acquire no larger meaning. But this is no ordinary election. Its ideological character makes a sensible pattern of disparate factors. And that, of course, is what ideology is for; it creates a consciousness that can be laid over random subjects as an outline traced on paper assembles scattered dots into a picture. Grenada, then, is no isolated adventure but a tactic in the strategy of rollback—Reaganism's long-term policy of destroying socialism and preventing revolution in the Third World (and that is only the beginning). Defense spending is not a set of figures but a way of increasing militarization of America's political economy, and its cultural life as well. Taxes and deficits are tools for increasing the power and enriching the coffers of the corporate class. Family values refer to more rigid social controls, leadership means authoritarianism, school prayer and support for religious education are means of hastening the privatization of American society—a key strategy.

The unusual level of polarization that most political commentators noticed in the campaign earlier this year was a

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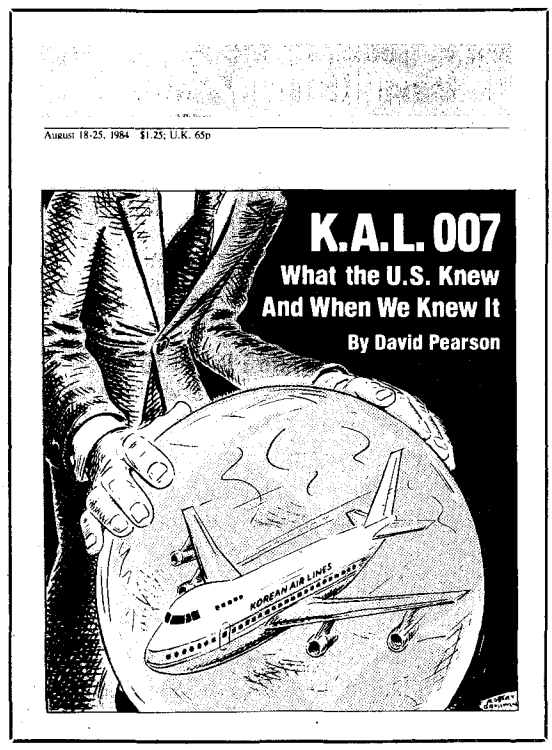
symptom of its ideological nature. It is a truism of political science that candidates move to the middle to maximize their appeal as the voting day approaches. But Ronald Reagan and his allies around the country have been different. For the most part, they have sharpened rather than leveled debate, hardened rather than softened positions, divided rather than merged constituencies and generally occupied extremes rather than the center of the spectrum. For a moment it seemed that Reagan was bidding to become the peace candidate, but he used his *pro forma* meeting with Andrei Gromyko to emphasize his toughness.

The ideological thrust comes almost entirely from the Reagan side. Mondale and most other Democrats, as well as the few surviving "moderate" Republicans outside the Reagan camp, are still waging a pragmatic campaign. Mondale waffles on Grenada and Central America, military spending and the economy, cheering his core of liberal supporters one day, reaching out to conservatives the next. The President makes no such concessions. For his purpose is not simply to win votes but to organize and train the movement. Reaganism feeds on divisiveness, pitting fundamentalist and orthodox religions against liberal ones, whites against blacks, the Sun Belt against the Rust Belt, the service and technological industries against primary and manufacturing sectors, the upper classes against the lower, men against women, families against the unwed, individuals against the state. As Reaganism articulates those values it moves its constituencies—perhaps already the new majority—toward an ideological pole. That is not coalition making but movement building, and it has been as effective as anything seen in American politics since the early days of the New Deal.

Reaganism has developed from the several trends and transient phenomena that followed the convulsive social activity of the 1960s. It takes ideas, energies and some personnel from such varied elements as the George Wallace movement, neoconservatism, the New Right, neoliberalism, fundamentalism, post-feminism, the "back to basics" movement in education, the "return to roots" trend in Judaism, Catholic orthodoxy, the white backlash to integration and affirmative action, the straight-male hostility to women's liberation and gay rights, the Anglophone aversion to bilingualism. It also draws on historic American Populism, especially its racist, nativist and regionalist themes. It twines with some curiously contradictory threads in Progressivism: America Firstism and moral imperialism, a distrust of politics and politicians, an antagonism to Wall Street and monopolies. For its personal values it draws on social Darwinism, but its economic vision looks quite the other way, to a heavenly city of corporate control. Chronologically, Reaganism belongs to the late period of America's imperial drama, as fear of impending doom and a sense of inevitable loss prepare the actors for unwonted roles.

Many people or groups of people feel that they lost something, or lost out, in the Vietnam era and after. It is among those who see their power diminished, their profits dissipated, their mobility curtailed and their security endangered that Reaganism finds its social base. Included are



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whites in general and men in general; conservative political figures of both parties; the military and defense community; some Jews, most European ethnics and entry-level yuppies. They all have different reasons to resent the old liberal order. There's simple, straightforward racism and male chauvinism, to begin with, and it would be hard to underestimate the strength of those factors in Reaganism's support. Anyone who probes the political consciousness of white American males usually finds that what they like most about the Reagan Administration is the way it puts blacks and women in their places.

To be sure there are critical contradictions within Reaganism's base. George Wallace's old following, which in many areas folded into Reaganism, included Northern blue-collar workers who were devastated by the course of regional decay and technological development accelerated by the Vietnam War. But some of them have been alienated by Administration policies that slight the older regions and their industries. Many Catholics dislike the dogma imposed by their hierarchy on social issues, and refuse to go along with its support for Reaganism. A number of Jews like some parts of Reaganism but worry about its aggressive Christianity. And a small but energetic group within the world of finance capital still thinks that Reagan is practicing voodoo economics, and fear that he could blow up the world (and their banks) if the spirit moves him.

Although some of those people may vote for Reagan—for good reason, or no reason at all—a vote for the man does not mean an enlistment in his movement, nor is a vote against him an expression of opposition to the movement. Most liberals and moderate Democrats who voted for George McGovern did not thereupon join up in the New Left that promoted the candidate. Membership in Reaganism requires a deeper commitment, and for that an institutional base is being built.

At the cornerstone are the fundamentalist churches and their rapidly growing school system, which threatens the health and even the life of public education; about a thousand new religious elementary schools were opened this year. Alongside are the foundations and think tanks, the military and militaristic institutions, sports and celebrations, broadcasting and publishing, volunteer and charitable institutions and a new breed of ideologically oriented businesses. Amway sales agents are Reaganist cadre; so are R.O.T.C. trainees, weekend "survival game" players, religious disk jockeys and Bible salesmen, and certain professional athletes. Everyone who watched the World Series heard that the San Diego Padres' pitching staff is stuffed with John Birchers. The Olympics became a Reaganist spectacle, and the chant "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" was appropriated for Reagan-Bush rallies.

The Administration actively supports institutions that promote its designated values. It wants to give tax credits to private schools, it encourages private patriotic displays (such as the Statue of Liberty extravaganza which promises to be next year's Olympics), it places ideologues in key positions (such as in the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Federal Communications Commission), it gives government access to Reaganist organizations like Accuracy in Media. Such support makes perfect strategic sense. Institutions teach people to think in specific ways. Private institutions teach "private" values: competitive enterprise over collective endeavor, the family unit over the heterogeneous community, male authority over sexual democracy, patriotism over internationalism, selfishness over altruism, having over sharing.

There is nothing new or inherently sinister in the *process* of ideological institution building. Liberals did a good job of it for many decades and succeeded in creating a liberal value system for the whole country. Radicals made a stab at the same thing in the 1960s. Underground newspapers and FM stations, "new age" restaurants and businesses, noncompetitive sporting events, rock concerts, the many expressions of a new feminist culture, black studies programs and gay organizations all were designed to give their participants an opportunity to reorient their individual values and social consciences. If history is a question of consciousness, the way to transform the world is to change people's minds. Reaganism grasps that simple and profound reality, and is taking appropriate measures.

As Reaganism was gathering steam, liberalism began looking for the proper response, a way to recapture the terms of political debate, to re-enter the social discourse, to gain the moral high ground or the upper hand of power. Simple right-baiting would not work. The day has passed when just the "conservative" label was enough to discredit its bearer. Nowadays it is worn proudly, while "liberal" has become the pejorative of choice.

For a long time liberals carried on a painful search for "new ideas," a self-defeating maneuver which merely confirmed the popular impression that the liberal intellectual and political program was finished. Next, liberals began adopting Reaganist constructs—family values, national security, patriotism—and attempted to give them progressive content. Gov. Mario Cuomo's wildly applauded speech to the Democratic Convention in July represented a bid to capture the family issue. Mondale has tried to appropriate the security issue by announcing his plans for humane, safe and cheap interventionism: a quarantine of Nicaragua rather than an invasion, military expeditions to save American lives rather than to topple governments, a leisurely advance in the arms race rather than a blitzkrieg dash to global supremacy. Various leftists and liberals keep insisting that the flag belongs to everyone and that patriotism is the first refuge for citizens of all creeds and colors; they rarely speak of internationalism.

The liberal cultural establishment has fallen into the Reaganist trap. It accepts the shape of the new discourse so long as it can play with the language. Films, television and the press say things like "Family values are fine if the families are kind to blacks"; "Patriotism is good if we talk with the Russians"; "Sexism is inevitable, but men should do the dishes"; "The media can reorient itself as long as it is objective." But consider how much things have changed in only a few years. American culture used to present pictures

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of traditional families in disarray, its castoffs looking for new arrangements; of an America that was at least as much an enemy to the rest of the world as a friend; of a press battling for justice and supporting the poor against power and privilege.

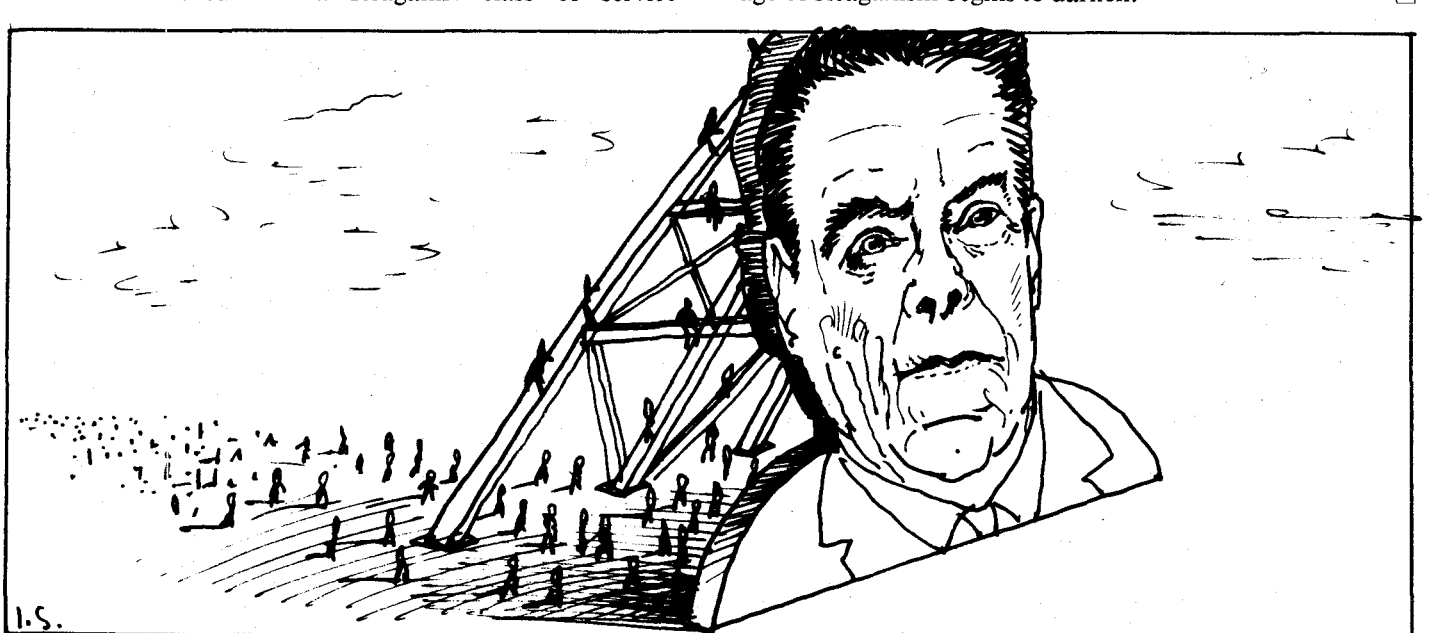
Culturally, Hollywood has responded by dishing up the new themes with the old humane details thrown in for filler. The clutch of new films set in the country defer for atmosphere to the Reaganist nostalgia for a mythic American heartland, but the people brim with liberal values of racial integration, collective struggle against greedy profiteers, and kindness toward the handicapped. For the first time some out-and-out examples of Reaganism are creeping into Hollywood (the premise, if not the conclusion, of *Red Dawn*), and the struggle is heating up on television, where the value systems are locked in nightly combat.

Since Reaganism sets the terms of the debate, it need not be overly concerned about the details. It holds the high ground; what happens at the lower levels is curious but not crucial. Reaganism can live with ideological pluralism, but it still will strive for the upper hand.

What is the Reaganist project? It begins with the idea of rollback: not only in international affairs, where it is directed against revolution in the Third World and, finally, against Communist Eastern Europe, but also in domestic matters, where it aims to repeal the progressive developments of a century of liberal action. If that seems farfetched, conjure a more radical fantasy: Turn-of-the-century America has a politically active military establishment directing a militarized economy in a Christian nation. Civil rights and civil liberties are subject to circumscription by a Supreme Court whose members are vetted by religious leaders and ideological overseers. Foreign adventures arouse little opposition because the pool of potential protesters has shrunk with the degradation of democratic education and the repression of radical and liberal institutions. All but the most pliant labor unions are decertified. The old middle class has vanished and a Reaganist class of service managers, franchise owners and venture capitalists sits on a huge underclass of burger wrappers and security guards. The press is assiduously neutral, the airwaves are full of hymns and sermons, and libraries are divided into a section of dog stories and Gothic romances for the public and locked stacks of books with more controversial subjects for expert eyes only.

If that seems unlikely, as it certainly is, the reason is contained in the contradictions within Reaganism as well as in the opposition. The divisions between the fundamentalists and the corporatists; the ethnics and the yuppies; the blue-collar workers and the technocrats; the Northeasterners and the Southwesterners, could be glossed over this year, while electoral triumph was in sight, but those conflicts of interest must sooner or later erode the strength of the movement. Although Reaganism is wider and deeper than Reagan himself, his presence and performance hold the abrasive elements together.

It is the dual nature of Reaganism's strength—its personal and ideological character—that offers the best opportunity for opposition from the outside. The political fight against the Reagan Administration, primarily but not exclusively in the electoral arena, can be transformed into the fight against the ideology. Just as the liberal and left attack on McCarthyism was waged largely against Joe McCarthy, so this battle must take advantage of the organizational symbol. Beyond that, Reaganism's social and political system is bound to produce specific counterattacks. The conditions that produced revolution in the Third World, the black struggle at home, the women's movement and the demands for economic and social equity only a few years ago have not essentially changed. Reaganism cannot work quickly or efficiently enough to alter the consciousness that developed then, nor can it effectively remove the conditions or erase the demands. It will have to rely on repression and neglect to maintain its forward motion and, finally, its stability. And we all know what happens then. It's not too soon to start thinking about the heady days to come as the age of Reaganism begins to darken. □



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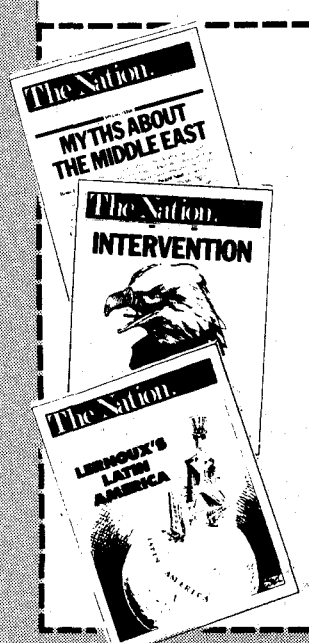

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

444 Days

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Van Gogh in Arles

On December 23, 1888, Van Gogh cropped his famous ear. Eleven days later, on January 3, Nietzsche flung himself, weeping, across the neck of a horse being flogged. I am uncertain what, if anything, to make of the fact that the most advanced painter and the most advanced philosopher in Europe should have gone spectacularly into madness at so nearly the same moment. But the parallels are worth considering. Both men were northerners, drawn south to "the orange-gold land where the lemons flower" by the promise of a healing warmth and light. Both were medical cranks, watchers over their wasting bodies, complainers of surprisingly congruent symptoms. Passages in their letters could be translations of each other in their litany of physical pain and malfunction—eyes, brain, stomach, bowels. Each sought a kind of domestic love so consistently denied him that one must infer a deep sexual unattractiveness. So both resorted to prostitutes—the *grues et grenouilles* ("cranes and frogs") that figure as rebuses in one of Vincent's uncharacteristic visual puns—to whom one supposes the fateful pathogens of their breakdowns were due. In both cases, insanity climaxed a decade of intense, transformative activity, during which neither was appreciated outside a circle of negligible diameter.

When recognition came at last, both seemed instantly accessible to audiences which knew little of philosophy or art. Nietzsche remains the philosopher of those who do not read philosophy, while the Van Gogh reproduction has been the standard decorative touch in middle-class living rooms throughout our culture. And finally, the biographical realities were so vivid as to provide universal mythic paradigms of true genius—so vivid as to make it all but impossible to think of their work save in the context of the experience it came from, rather than in the wider historical framework of the discipline each revolutionized and made anew. But, in fact, this response is justified by the theories each stands for. Nietzsche taught that philosophy, his own presumably included, is essentially confessional, the projection onto the screen of the world of the thinker's own will and perspective. And though a degree of expressiveness is to be found throughout the history of art, one cannot overestimate how much our perception of its existence is due to Van Gogh, who knew that he was bending representational accuracy to expressive ends; each of his works must be understood as a response to a scene or a moment transfigured by his feelings. So there is a singular appropriateness in an exhibition that maps his work against the chronicle of his life.

Van Gogh in Arles (at the Metropolitan Museum of Art until December 30) is a curatorial triumph in saturated pictobiography, covering the climactic period in the artist's truncated creative life: 444 days in the Provençal town, supposed to be "the land of the blue tones and gay colors." It begins in a daze of almost ecstatic optimisms, as Van Gogh embarked upon what he hoped would be an adventure in artistic, personal, social and moral fulfillment, an exaltation of love and color. It ended, of course, with the violent clash with Gauguin and the legendary mutilation. Subtracting the stretches of ill health and the struggle to establish the fragile and finally futile routines of mere living, it was a time of total artistic productivity: 200 paintings, many of them large; about the same number of letters, in effect esthetic reflections as well as analyses of the paintings he copied for his correspondents; and a hundred or so watercolors and drawings.

It is clear that he cannot have spent any great time on single works, and indeed he often did several in a single day—one of the two versions of *L'Arlésienne* was painted up in less than an hour. The parallel with Nietzsche's rhythms is exact, at least if we construe the relevant literary unit not as the book (though he published a book a year in the decade of his power) but as the aphorism or the short essay, which he composed with the same intensity and urgency as Van Gogh did pictures, striding about much the same meridional landscape some kilometers to the east. The severely abbreviated *durée* of these works has to connect with the temperament the two figures shared, and the artistic and philosophical agenda each evolved to justify a style of creativity neither could especially help.

The first room of the exhibition shows a number of the fourteen orchards Van Gogh painted in March and April 1888, in joyous response to an aspect of nature made intoxicating by the harsh cold that had greeted him when, instead of the bath of colored brilliance he had anticipated, he stepped off the train from Paris into a foot of snow. Part of the joyousness must be explained with reference to the congruence between the subject—trees in blossom—and one of the standard motifs of Japanese art, for it was one of his hopes, confided to his brother, Theo, "that looking at nature under a bright sky might give us a better idea of the Japanese way of feeling and drawing." Japanism was a constant spiritual possibility for him: one of the self-portraits deliberately presents his shaved and bony head as that of "a simple bonze worshipping the Eternal Buddha," and many of the late landscapes show the unmistakable angles and proportions of depictions by Hokusai or Hiroshige of bridges or roadways or rivers. The late colors of absinthe, sunflower orange, glassy blue, the red of blood and poppies, have not yet appeared: these canvases have the pale tonalities of the North and the lightly touched surfaces of Impressionism rather than the gouged, plowed viscosities of the late, heavily pigmented works.

Impressionism made Van Gogh possible, since it employed a particularly direct imposition of paint and hence an immediacy of contact between artist and canvas: he could not have achieved the artistic personality we know by means of slow drying glazes or under the material constraints of fresco painting. But much as those first paintings of orchards in flower resemble, with their dabs and drags and iterated brushmarks, the signature of Impressionism, the artistic impulses are perfectly opposed. For Impressionism was finally concerned with representation, with getting the colors of the seen world right—hence the ideologized denunciation of black shadows—and so the movement led naturally to the kind of optical scientism we find in Seurat. But Van Gogh really was concerned with feeling, simply appropriating the inventions of

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Impressionism as his own vocabulary of expression—the dots of Pointillism, Monet's bright, immediate daubs, the strokes of Cézanne. By August he writes that the Impressionists will find fault, "because instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes, I use color more arbitrarily, in order to express myself forcibly." So it was with drawing. Van Gogh could not have been Vincent through grisaille or silverpoint, or the textural crayoned geometries of Seurat: he reinvented the reed pen, and the lines refer as much to him as to forces in nature—they are realized energies rather than outlines, emotive rather than depictive. "Could I, in Paris, have done the drawing of the boats *in an hour* . . . just by letting my pen go?"

It is very moving that after the breakdown he wanted to return to the orchards of his Arlesian virginity, a desire frustrated by his prolonged hospitalization. It is very moving as well that one of the final paintings is a view of Arles through blown trees, with a blasted trunk the color of an aged elephant as its main element, its broken, barren branches stuck hopelessly up into the surprisingly cheery sky. But the body of the show is the sequence of images, collectively as famous as any in the history of art, of the bedroom and of his chair, the night cafe, the Zouave, of the Arlesian woman, stacked hay and sheaved wheat suffused with what he ruefully speaks of as "the high yellow note that I attained last summer," when he kept going, as he admits, by means of coffee, alcohol and no food to speak of at all.

The show's terminal painting is the terrifying self-portrait with the bandaged ear, done early in January 1889. Since the lopped ear is the one art-historical fact everyone in our culture may be expected to know, everyone is obliged to work through the show with the foreknowledge of its occurrence: we stand toward the exhibition just as the audience to a tragedy does toward its enactment, knowing things the hero does not know, namely how it will inevitably end. What he was heading for is finally here, in the last room, on the last wall. Wearing a fur hat painted perhaps symbolically blue, the color of ice—the sojourn ended as it began in the gelid southern winter—Vincent stares into the pathetic mirror we saw in the study of his bedroom, his eyes slightly crossed, green as wine bottles. Wherever he is, he is cold, for he is wearing his heavy coat, and the yellow smoke from his emblematic pipe spirals upward, past the maroon band behind him, into the ocher space above, where it disappears in the strokes of lemon yellow which press down like a steady rain of paint.

There is a great temptation to see this painting as an exercise in color theory, with its pedagogic use of complementaries, a kind of lesson in chromatic necessity. It is also tempting to read it as an effort to demonstrate that he was in control again, "an unsentimental and composed self-appraisal," as Ronald Pickvance writes in the superlative and indispensable catalogue. Indeed, at first glance it has the air of an advertisement for something that requires the image of a Dutchman at peace—tobacco, perhaps, or beer, or cheese. But then one has to think of how much fury, how much madness, was being kept at bay, of what moral energy it required to hold that bandaged slash at an esthetic distance—as so much white to contain the acute greens and yellows, just a curve to balance that of the black-blue edges of the hat. The title could have been *Ceci n'est pas un fou*. And it would have been false. The picture cannot be separated from the man, and the man was lost. It is a mute scream.

It is a relief to round that panel at last and enter the frantic sales place, where the visitor can turn in his tour guide and make his purchases from among the jigsaw puzzles and engagement calendars, the posters and reproductions and finally the postcards where the images somehow belong and where they are safe. Reproductions with an undeniable decorativity, they are actually quite gay. The painted reality on the other hand is shattering, and it takes a particularly strong soul to think of walking through it twice. It makes one think of the horrors of exact recurrence of which Nietzsche made so much. □

New Hope for Freud Sufferers

CAROL TAVRIS

THE NATURE OF THE CHILD. *By Jerome Kagan. Basic Books. 309 pp. $22.50.*

MOTHER CARE/OTHER CARE. *By Sandra Scarr. Basic Books. 302 pp. $16.95.*

THOU SHALT NOT BE AWARE. *By Alice Miller. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 331 pp. $15.95.*

Change, being an American value, is an American industry. Therapies, books, support groups and religious sects—everything from Alcoholics Anonymous to Zen—promise renewal: change your unfashionable looks, personality and style; change your persistent problems, grudges and griefs; change your irritating spouse, house and habits. Among the cornucopia of solutions, however, are three distinct, competing philosophies.

§ Adult change is parallel to child development. It proceeds in a series of biologically programmed stages that direct the passages of adulthood. This school, originally led by Erik Erikson with his eight ages of man ("man" being literal in this case), has produced such popular books as Daniel Levinson's *Seasons of a Man's* [again] *Life*, Gail Sheehy's *Passages* and Roger Gould's *Transformations*.

§ Adult change is difficult, but it can occur through intensive, introspective therapies that liberate the "real self" and shuck off the demands of mere existence. This is the humanist/religious school, which basically believes that change is possible if you *want* to change, or think about it enough, or have a religious conversion. Wayne Dyer's repetitive pep talks and Billy Graham's endless preachments fall into this category, as do self-help books in all their incarnations. Of course, when belief or conversion fails to deliver the promised change, readers conclude it is their fault for not trying hard enough; the advice, they assume, is fine.

§ Adults don't change. Personality is formed in childhood; and although therapy can help you understand why you are what you are, you can't ever make major alterations in the basic blueprint. This is the fundamental premise of the psychoanalytic school, succinctly summarized in the title of Alice Miller's highly popular first book,

Carol Tavris, a social psychologist, is the author of Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion *(Simon and Schuster/Touchstone).*

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Prisoners of Childhood. However, the age at which personality is supposedly fixed has been undergoing a sort of downward creep in recent years. First it was roughly age five, at the Oedipal crisis. Then it was three, and we began reading that the first three years of life were crucial to a child's development. Lately it's come down to age one, and some analysts are arguing that nothing really matters after that, not even Harvard or HUAC, the Pulitzer Prize or Ronald Reagan.

The communications researcher George Gerbner once noted that the distinctive feature of human beings is not language or toolmaking or, Lord knows, wisdom. "Man," he said (speaking generically), "is the only animal that tells stories—and lives by the stories he tells." Theories of change matter because they affect private lives, social policy, advice to parents and the therapeutic treatment of people who have been abused or otherwise victimized, at any age.

And that is why it matters that all three most popular theories of change are, in their fundamental premises, wrong. The fields of child development and adult development are burgeoning with new data, much of it the results of decadeslong research. They are showing that the first three years of life have little predictive power for late childhood, let alone adulthood; that people can and do survive terrible early experiences; that parents do not create children in their own image, no matter how many toys and technologies they provide, because children have something to say about the kind of people they become. Some aspects of personality do remain consistent across the life span, but by and large adults are not prisoners of childhood. Adult change, however, depends on adult experiences, circumstances and relationships. It does not occur because a programmed internal clock goes off at ten-year intervals or because an individual merely wishes to be different. It is caused by, and sustained by, an individual's social and material world.

The consequences of this research for the stories we tell about childhood, parent-child relations and the possibility of change are revolutionary. Two books that tell the new story brilliantly are Jerome Kagan's *The Nature of the Child*, seven essays on the philosophy and psychology of child development and its relation to adulthood, and San-

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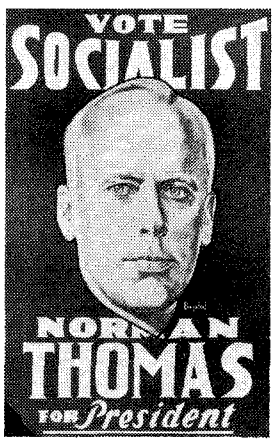

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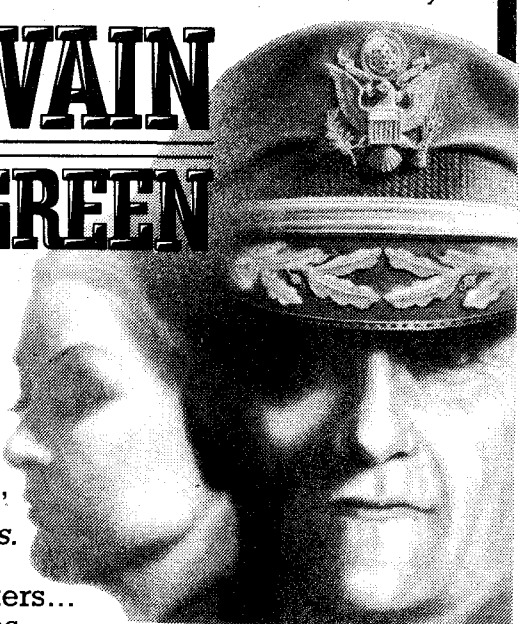

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dra Scarr's *Mother Care/Other Care*, a clearheaded, scientifically grounded analysis of the emotional and political issue of day care. (As an adherent of Calvin Trillin's Blurb-Disclosure Law, I will state that I have written a laudatory blurb for Scarr's book and do know and admire the author. Her work is still superb.) Both books, unusual in social science, are lucid and readable. Scarr's is actually a case in point of the larger issues raised by Kagan, and together they challenge some of the most cherished notions of the right (mother care is the sine qua non of child rearing; mothers had better be there every second of a baby's first eighteen years; the family is the most formative influence) *and* of the left (environment is all, biology is nothing; abused, deprived children become abusive, deprived adults).

In his first chapter, Kagan explores the themes of continuity and change, biology and experience, not as antithetical constructs but as parts of a whole. Anthropologists have observed that Westerners hear music or conversations by listening to the notes or words. The Eastern way is to listen to the silences between the sounds (the Japanese call the spaces between events *ma*). Similarly, Westerners see development as a connected set of events and results, even when they must impose connectedness retrospectively, as psychoanalysis does. Kagan hears the *ma* in development.

For the fact is that many infant qualities do not last, and infant experiences do not have a lifelong impact. Some are outgrown. Some are supplanted with maturation. Some are overturned by experience; indeed, Kagan cites study after study to show the startling number of "deprived" children who outgrew their early experiences and went on to lead healthy, contented lives. Kagan uses the metaphor of a marble rolling in a trough: because the marble rolls in a straight line, we cannot infer anything about the inherent property of marbles to roll in a straight line. Most people used to live in environmental troughs. Poor children grew up to be poor, middle-class children got into good schools, and *voilà*! theories of the consistency of personality prevailed. In recent decades, the troughs have been breaking down and, correspondingly, so has evidence of the consistency of personality. The factors related to adult satisfaction, behavior and emotional problems are almost invariably other adult experiences, not childhood ones.

But neither Kagan nor Scarr concludes that children are infinitely malleable, either. Children bring two things to every experience that their parents and their environments cannot control: temperament and interpretation. It is not that parents make no difference, for of course they do; it is that what parents do has no predictable result. The reason, says Kagan, is that children impose meanings on experience; what matters is not what the parent does, but the intention the child imputes to the parent's action. "If it were otherwise," he argues, "we could not explain why the children of Puritan parents were not less well adapted than today's youth, or why the young adolescent boys of an isolated New Guinea tribe who perform ritual fellatio on older boys regard themselves neither as sexually deviant nor as an oppressed minority." This idea represents a major departure from psychoanalysis, which assumes common, indeed universal, meanings and interpretations of childhood experience. And it means that people are not prisoners of childhood unless they believe they are.

All guilty parents should proceed directly to *Mother Care/Other Care*, which untangles the knot of worries that many modern parents are led to feel, regardless of how they raise their children. Scarr gently ribs those who try to raise a "gourmet child, the intensely reared infant who is enticed or forced into learning funny symbols in the crib," even as she deflates those who decry day care for failing to be as good as mother care or who fear the dire effects of maternal employment. After reviewing what research has shown and not shown on these matters, Scarr concludes that most day-care situations, like most family situations, are good enough for children to develop normally. Only extreme conditions of deprivation and abuse, in home or institution, will slow down a normal child's natural rate of maturation.

That said, Scarr goes on to discuss realistic dilemmas for working mothers, and fathers; the nature of babies and toddlers (what they need and how much they can learn as they grow); and, finally, she includes an evaluation of modern day care in America with a checklist of what parents should look for in services and caretakers. Throughout, Scarr dissects the popular advice of "experts." You may remember the media's enchantment, for example, with "bonding," the mystical attachment between mother and infant, without which healthy baby development was thought to be doomed. "Does this mean," asks Scarr, "that you can't go to the bathroom alone, never mind to work, without destroying the baby's psyche?" She reassures the reader at once. No.

Many psychologists and nonprofessionals fear and dislike the arguments set forth in these two books. If parents don't have a lifelong effect on their children, aren't their power and responsibility as parents diminished? If children are more flexible than we thought and can survive even disastrous childhoods, doesn't this give cruel parents the license to be abusive? If children have different subjective responses to the same experience, based on their temperament and perceptions, why should we try to improve objective conditions? If childhood isn't the crucible of personality and opportunity, doesn't that give the Reagan Administration permission to kill even more services for children?

Those are possible consequences of this view of human development, but my feeling is that cruel parents and governments already have as many rationalizations as they need. There are also more heartening consequences. If change is possible throughout life, you don't have to "catch" a person at some critical age, and a child is not doomed by age 10. If parents are not omnipotent, perhaps they can relax and not be intimidated by experts whose views seem to shift with the needs of the labor market. If one's interpretation of experience is more important than the experience, then therapies that dwell on the power of childhood trauma may in-

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advertently be making the victim suffer longer than is necessary. Most of all, to say that children and adults can transcend suffering is to attest to the extraordinary capacity of the human soul; it is not to condone suffering.

Alice Miller's *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware* continues her ongoing brief on behalf of children, describing the reality of their emotional, sexual and physical abuse. Psychoanalysts have been tinkering for years with various elements of the Freudian plot, quarreling about the hero, abandoning this dominant motive in favor of that dominant motive; within the psychoanalytic framework, Miller's revision is brave and startling. But to read *The Nature of the Child* is to realize that old tales can stand only so much tinkering. It is time for a new story. □

A Soft Rain

JON WIENER

DYLAN. *By Jonathan Cott. Rolling Stone Press/Doubleday. 246 pp. $35.*

A lot of people who grew up in the 1960s and now have $35 to spend on this coffeetable book can look back on Bob Dylan's abandonment of politics as a justification of their own. But Dylan today is a fundamentalist crank who sings about "adulterers in churches/pornography in the schools" and who recently told *Rolling Stone* that "politics is an instrument of the Devil." It's not easy to regard him as a role model. For those who care or cared about his music, Dylan is a problem; we want to know what happened to him. This book doesn't help.

Hundreds of pictures, lavishly displayed, make *Dylan* essentially a fan book, but the text by Jonathan Cott is much more ambitious than the genre requires. Cott's interpretations are peculiarly pretentious, while his analysis of Dylan's origins and development avoids the hard questions.

Cott refers to the "ferment and subversiveness" of the 1960s, but he doesn't explain how Dylan's political engagements, especially with the civil rights movement, lay behind the protest songs that brought him fame. During that period the primary influence on his political ideas seems to have been his girlfriend Suze Rotolo, who worked in New York City's CORE office. (She appears shivering at his side on the cover of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.) Dylan himself traveled to Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1963 to give a concert for the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee's voter registration drive there. The book includes four pages of photographs of him in Greenwood, printed bigger than we've ever seen them. In general, the book's format makes a virtue of photographs over text, but even here there are difficulties. Fuzzy snapshots are printed the same monstrous size as formal posed portraits, and the two are bled together; on one two-page spread, Dylan, his nose stuck into the page break, looks like a robin digging for a worm. Also, some of the captions are incorrect.

After staying up all one night talking about civil rights, Dylan wrote "Blowin' in the Wind." When Medgar Evers was murdered, he wrote "Only a Pawn in Their Game"; he sang it at the 1963 March on Washington. During the Cuban missile crisis, he wrote what remains his most powerful song, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," a series of chilling images of America. Two of those songs appeared on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, released in 1963 just after the Beatles' simple "Please Please Me" hit number one on the British charts. Dylan was only 22, but he had brought his personal vision and his political commitments together with a power he would never again equal.

Another Side of Bob Dylan appeared the following year, and stunned his fans. It cast the political and the personal as antagonistic forms of liberation. "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now," he sang, dismissing his engagement with social issues. The songs insisted that Dylan's private nightmares were more important to him than anything in the political realm. Deeply anti-authoritarian but hostile to organized politics, Dylan pointed the way to the apolitical side of the counterculture.

In 1965 Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* merged Woodie Guthrie's music

Jon Wiener's Come Together: John Lennon in His Time *was published in July by Random House.*

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with Chuck Berry's. *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, released in 1965 and 1966, respectively, confirmed that he had opened rock and roll to a wider range of personal statements than anyone had imagined possible.

When Dylan stopped playing his protest songs, some of his old fans called him a sellout and a phony. The same things were said when he "betrayed" folk for rock, then rock for country. But there was a strategy behind those moves: Dylan was undercutting the role of superstar. He was trying to disappear as an identifiable persona and tell his demanding and possessive audience, "You don't own me."

Once Dylan had shattered his persona as a protest singer, he could return to political issues whenever they engaged his imagination. In 1971 he released "George Jackson," a moving portrait of the Black Panther killed by San Quentin guards that year; Cott's book ignores the song. In 1972, John Lennon persuaded him to join in a concert tour to urge young people to vote against Nixon's re-election. The tour was to end at a "political Woodstock," a free antiwar concert and rally outside the Republican National Convention, then scheduled for San Diego.

Together with Allen Ginsberg, Dylan wrote and recorded "Going to San Diego" for the tour. When Nixon found out about the plan, he ordered Lennon deported, and the tour was canceled. The song was not released until 1983, on Allen Ginsberg's album *First Blues*. Cott doesn't tell any part of that story.

Dylan performed at many of the major political concerts of the 1970s—among them, the 1971 Concert for Bangladesh and the 1974 Friends of Chile concert which raised funds for political prisoners after the coup against Salvador Allende. While they receive no commentary in the text, the concerts are documented in the book's photographs, as are Dylan's 1976 benefits for Hurricane Carter, a former boxing champion imprisoned for murdering three people in a New Jersey bar.

The Hurricane Carter benefits were more a case of Dylan's sympathy for another misunderstood superstar than a genuine political project. Dylan launched a campaign to establish Carter's innocence, starting with a good song, "Hurricane." The Night of the Hurricane benefit filled Madison Square Garden; even Representative Ed Koch came. The campaign bore fruit: the courts ordered a new trial for Carter, who went free on bail.

The benefits were immensely successful, taking in some $600,000, but *The New York Times* revealed that 90 percent of the money was spent on "expenses" for Dylan's concerts rather than on Carter's defense. The woman who chaired the defense committee charged that Carter had assaulted her in a motel room and indicated that she considered him capable of murder. At the second trial the jury affirmed the original guilty verdict, and again Carter received a life sentence for murder. Dylan had no comment and neither does Cott.

Cott lacks the critical distance that would enable him to deal with some of those issues. He did interview Dylan, who told him, "Bob Dylan has always been here. . . . Before I was born, there was Bob Dylan." Taking that statement to heart, Cott has found the earlier Bob Dylans, going back to "the first known troubadour poet, the eleventh-century Guillaume IX," who, like Dylan, "revealed many faces and voices." Cott also finds something of Dylan in the

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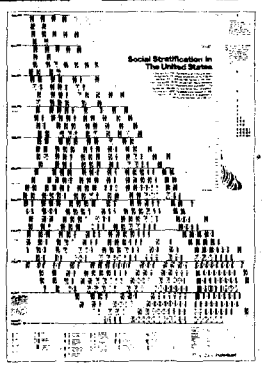

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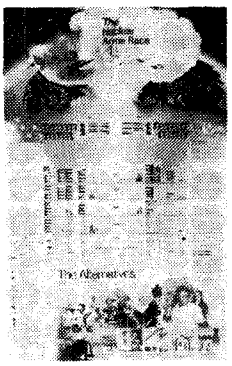

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thirteenth-century *Carmina Burana*, in the fifteenth-century French poet François Villon, the sixteenth-century Chinese philosopher Li Chih and the eighteenth-century Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav. Dylan, we learn, took seriously "Walt Whitman's great and inspiring advice: . . . 'Stand up for the stupid and crazy.'" (Perhaps Cott was thinking about Dylan's recent defense of right-wing Jewish groups.)

In addition to his other absurdities, Cott repeats the moth-eaten cliché that Dylan is "America's greatest poet," which Ellen Willis dispensed with fifteen years ago. "Poetry requires economy, coherence, and discrimination," she wrote. Dylan turns out five images where one will do, his phrases are often tangled, his metaphors are silly and he tries to make everything rhyme. He's a great songwriter but a terrible poet.

Dylan's 1979 born-again album *Slow Train Coming* poses the greatest problem for Cott. He fails to see that in some ways it was another of Dylan's "betrayals" of his fans, another act of self-annihilation. It was also more than that. The problem isn't Dylan's embrace of Christianity; Biblical imagery and the theme of salvation were present in his music from the beginning. Other rock superstars have turned to Jesus: Elvis recorded four gospel albums, and Little Richard gave up his pop career to become an evangelist. While their Christian music expresses the desperate hope that Jesus will help them and that "everything will be all right," Dylan's *Slow Train Coming* is a slick, ugly statement announcing that he is saved and the rest of us will rot in hell.

What happened? Borrowing Dylan's words, Cott says Dylan became a Christian because he "had offered up his innocence and had gotten repaid with scorn." His previous album, *Street Legal*, had indeed been treated scornfully; *Village Voice* critic Robert Christgau called it the work of a "boozy-voiced misogynist in his late thirties . . . in love with his own self-generated misery." If only Christgau had called it "mysterious and gripping," like Cott, Dylan might never have taken shelter in the sign of the cross.

An expensive rock book doesn't have to be this dumb. Two earlier volumes in the Rolling Stone Press series, Geoffrey Stokes's *The Beatles* and Dave Marsh's *Elvis*, had stonger graphics and a genuinely serious text. Marsh, for example, argues that Elvis was a great example of the American capacity for self-invention, locked in a conflict with those who dominated American culture and dismissed him as a dumb redneck. Unlike Cott, Marsh does not avoid the dark side of his subject. But Elvis and the Beatles are somehow suited to this kind of visually elegant treatment; whatever Bob Dylan has become, this $35 coffee-table book isn't his format. □

Novel Conditions

BLAIR T. BIRMELIN

A SERVANT'S TALE. *By Paula Fox. North Point Press. 321 pp. $16.50.*

Nadine Gordimer has described black South African playwrights as being concerned not with the development of actions but with the representation of conditions. In her latest novel, *A Servant's Tale*, Paula Fox, who is one of our most intelligent (and least appreciated) contemporary novelists, clearly has represented conditions. Fox's earlier novel *The Widow's Children*, about several generations of Cuban-born Spaniards in America, reverberates with much more than family history, though it is also marvelously specific as to time, place and character. In *A Servant's Tale*, the conditions represented are those in the life of a Hispanic woman named Luisa. Born and raised on a small island in the Caribbean, she emigrates with her parents to New York City in 1936 and grows up to spend the rest of her life cleaning other people's rooms.

Luisa tells her own story, which begins with her increasing awareness of the scandal of her illegitimate birth in Malagita, a tiny village employed down to the last soul on the coffee plantation of the de la Cueva family. Her mother, a kitchen maid in the de la Cuevas' *vivienda*, is in time-honored fashion seduced by the son of the house, Orlando. Oddly, their liaison lasts: Orlando refuses to marry the heiress of a neighboring plantation, and his mother cuts him out of the family fortune. Eventually Luisa's parents marry, but their union is a bitter one. He is violently contemptuous of his wife, who humbly continues to work at the big house in order to support him and their child.

Despite this domestic hell, Luisa's memories are precious to her. Small and poor and decaying, Malagita yet contains all the aspirations as well as the fears of its inhabitants. Their imaginations do not stray. It is Luisa's father who threatens this world, not because he is brutal and a wastrel but because he is educated and knows something of a world beyond. When revolution is imminent, Luisa and her family emigrate, exchanging their cabin for a damp basement in the barrio of upper Broadway. And so Luisa comes of age in isolation, her community shrunk to her poor parents and a series of even poorer boarders, all seeking refuge from hard times and the confusion of the city.

From this point on, Luisa's tale is a lament:

> My work, done and every day undone—was the dull, mechanical movement of a treadle. I dreamed of another life. I wondered if I had become the ghost of the plantation, if the people of the village, walking along the dirt roads at twilight, gazing up at the slowly darkening sky, would, sensing my presence, shiver and retreat indoors. Yet it was the very monotony of my servant's life that freed me to return in my thoughts to Malagita.

After a brief marriage and divorce, she goes back to work in order to support herself and her son. Though she gains the good will of her employers, she has only one real friend, a black girl who becomes a lawyer and later goes south to work in the civil rights movement. But Luisa is not touched by her friend's ambition or her idealism, and a servant she remains. Fox refuses to allow her heroine a resolution to this struggle; nor does she permit the reader the luxury of empathy and catharsis. Luisa's voice, objective as it seems, also makes her opaque. Regarding her relationship with her first employer, Luisa writes (and in tone and judgment, the title notwithstanding, this book is *written*, not spoken), "I sensed I must relinquish nothing of my secret life." Fox, having established this need for her character, respects it. We know Luisa only indirectly—her oval face through some-

Blair T. Birmelin is the author of The Superintendent *(Schocken). Her second novel,* The Dead Woman's Sister, *will be published next year, also by Schocken.*

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one's compliment, her stubbornness and Cinderella-like decency through her role as maid and mother. And if Fox is careful to diagram the historical conditions of her protagonist's world, she is also careful to communicate the peculiar quality of Luisa's social and political unawareness—less simple ignorance than a refusal to understand the complexities of an alien society.

With this novel as with an earlier one, *The Western Coast*, Fox demonstrates an interesting attitude toward what fiction can and cannot impart about a particular life and its relation to history. Admittedly we can never know the full extent to which a person affects or is affected by public events. But the author implies that our perception of a given period can be altered by the respectful study of an individual. It is in this way that her work is didactic. One is reminded of Flaubert's use of history in *L'Education Sentimentale* as something to be reseen, rewoven through individual perspectives, and of such American writers as Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris and William Carlos Williams, who struggled to reinterpret the orthodoxies of American history through their tales of individual people.

In *The Western Coast*, Fox represents the Depression years through the eyes of the ignorant young loner, Annie Gianfala, who moves through the end of the 1930s and the war years like a female Virgil winding through the circles of hell. Annie and Luisa perform something of the same function, which is to create a historical context that allows the reader to see events from below, as it were—with an objectivity that derives from powerlessness. And yet the earlier character, Annie, is finally the more effective catalyst, perhaps because Fox tells her story in the third person rather than the first. Luisa's perceptions can render psychologically detailed portraits of her parents and her employers—charming, lying Mrs. Burgess, or the Millers, whose two demanding children "had their secret lives [too], refuges from the weight of that love that seemed to measure and record every breath they drew." But what we get to know of Luisa herself is more conventionalized and finally less interesting. "I sensed . . . a shapeless lump of obduracy in myself," she writes. "But I could not lift it up into light." That diffident monotone, which Fox has purposefully chosen, insures that her servant will remain in shadow. □

THEATER.

PAUL BERMAN

Kipling

The actor's range of skills is *Kipling*'s greatest marvel. Alec McCowen dashes out on the Royale Theatre stage to announce that he's sorry to be there and doesn't like to have his privacy intruded upon. Immediately you feel annoyed: if *he* doesn't want to be there, why should you? But you scarcely listen to the words because he has riveted you with the way he removes his scarf. He fingers the books on his study desk. When we were alive, the fingers seem to say, we were quite some writer. We wrote "If," for instance, and those words you do pay attention to. Never has "If" seemed so profound and truthful. McCowen recites "Gunga Din." He argues that "Gunga Din" shows Kipling's lack of racism. The argument is not too convincing. There's nothing in "Gunga Din" that a racist mightn't feel. "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din," spoken to a coolie who maintains his servile status at the brink of death, is a remark too rich with ambiguity to be declared evidence of anything.

No matter, never has "Gunga Din" seemed so gloriously manly. As for the point of view, that of the ordinary oppressed soldier, it is narrow and ugly in some of these poems and bits of prose, but can you say it isn't deep? The insistence on preparedness, the admiration for the fighting man, the disdain for politicians who leave the army unfit—all seem perfectly legitimate. The argument for British imperialism has an odd point in its favor. It *is* too bad that England lost South Africa to the Boers. England might have been a hair less racist. So you find yourself nodding, all right, there's a point, while the actor struts around like a bantam cock and plays with his pipe. And it is because of McCowen that you agree to take all this in so sympathetically. Kipling's philosophy—respect for work, for toughness, for courage in adversity, hatred for cant, belief in authority and social hierarchy, but without any pretension of his own (so that he refused a knighthood and other awards he thought inappropriate for a writer)—is the sort of thing you can listen to only if the philosopher himself seems its exemplar.

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The doctrines as doctrines are none too appealing; but if they are expressions of character, you can't help respecting them. And that is surely character you see on stage.

It is, you feel, Kipling himself up there—or something better than Kipling, a Kipling who can recite "When 'Omer Smote 'Is Bloomin' Lyre" or "The Ballad of East and West" in full melodious voice. It is a Kipling with all the lyric gifts—gifts better suited to the stage perhaps than to the page—but also all of McCowen's gifts, which you never for a moment lose sight of, the gift of perfectly modulated motion, the gift of achieving precisely the right witty or forlorn gesture, the odd glance into the audience, the indignant set of the jaw, the moment of tragic emotion, the gift of accent (shaky only when he slips for a second into what seems like American speech, but magnificently Cockney when called for, which is often). It's a pleasure merely to watch the man put his pipe in his mouth. That gesture seems to say: I never averted my eyes from life. My soul is as big as the stage. And contrarily: I am a great actor. I play Kipling like a violin. I am an orchestra and there's no tone that cannot come from me.

The play itself, by Brian Clark, is pretty bad. The conceit about Kipling feeling annoyed to be present never goes away, and neither does your reciprocal annoyance. Kipling's life—Indian childhood, unhappy youth in England, return to India, first writings, American interlude (with the great phrase about New England autumns as an insurrection by the trees), the rage over unpreparedness in World War I—never takes emotional shape. At the end the play can barely get itself off the stage. But then the play isn't the main thing. It is McCowen's skill you go to see—though if you don't go soon, it will be too late. *Kipling* is on a limited engagement. □

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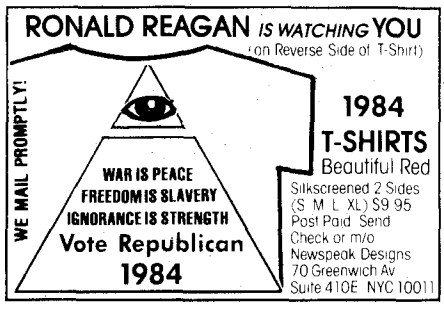

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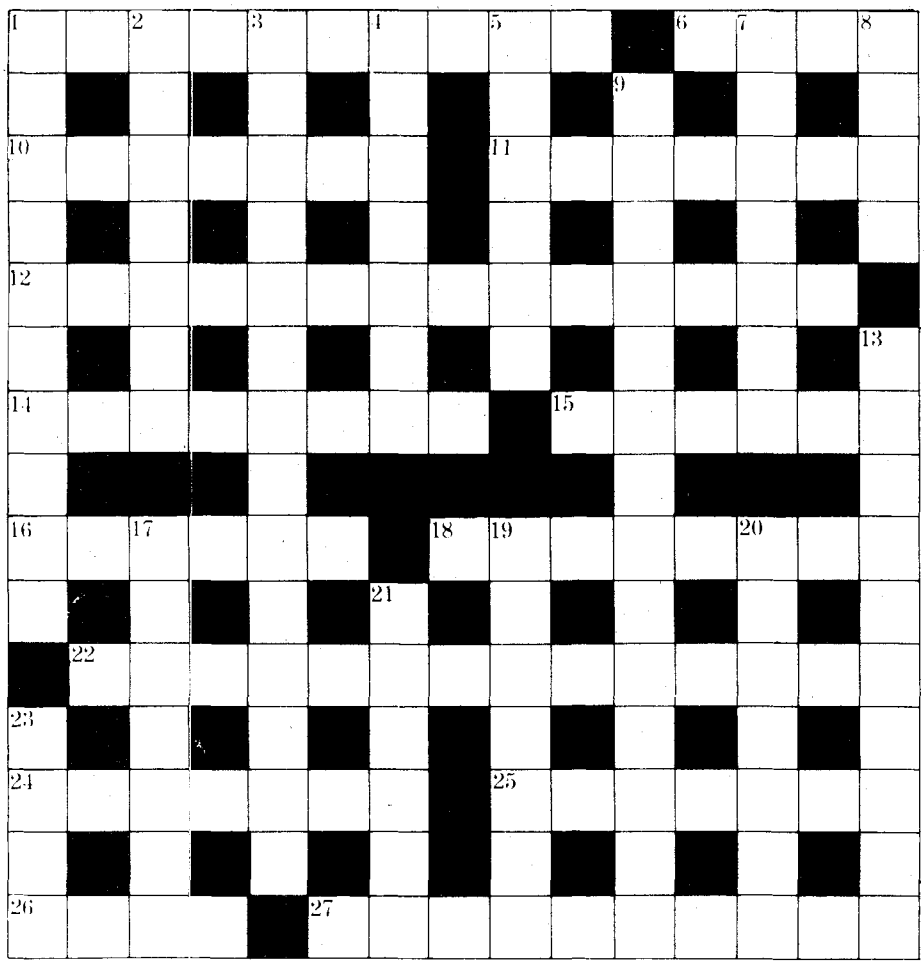

ACROSS

1 Embarrassed at the sound being interpreted like a rhythmic unit? (3,2,1,4)
6 One doesn't do it to the deck with the cotton type. (4)
10 Five hundred—commonly a lot—that's what the pensive scribbler makes! (7)
11 See 23 down
12 Said to be worn at one time by union stablemen, oddly enough. (14)
14 Perhaps January first on hand with a tree. (4,4)
15 Shed favor? (4-2)
16 Often goes public, but try on a new version. (6)
18 What's the point in the waterway being traditionally dangerous for missionaries? (8)
22 An approved model of the carrier, according to the political leader? (8-6)
24 Communist state? Quite the opposite, it is affirmed! (7)
25 Not a nice country—singularly like some place in South Dakota. (3,4)
26 See 8 down
27 How to get a free bar of soap as a last course. (10)

DOWN

1 Having the effect of redoing the inside and in German style. (10)
2 You might find welcome here—and a dram, too, prepared as well. (7)
3 Dummies in business with you? Not necessarily! (6,8)
4 It's able to make inhuman change! (7)
5 In essence, losing a rather large number would be ascetic. (6)
7 What you could have done if you didn't like Mondale or Reagan, etc. (but not necessarily to the editor!) (5,2)
8 and 26 across What we'd be if they removed all the overseas installations doesn't have any credibility. (8)
9 Does one have to listen to it twice in Paris—or is it a wordy play anyplace? (6,8)
13 Ringing of bells on part of the ship implies if you don't pay, you'll never get over it! (4,6)
17 English summers? (Fall seems imminent.) (7)
19 Sort of bound to follow the gold as a naturalist. (7)
20 Stop! Stop! A girl! (7)
21 It's certainly not easy going down, when broke. (4,2)
23 and 11 across Almost lies in big buildings with high ceilings? (4,7)

PUZZLED?

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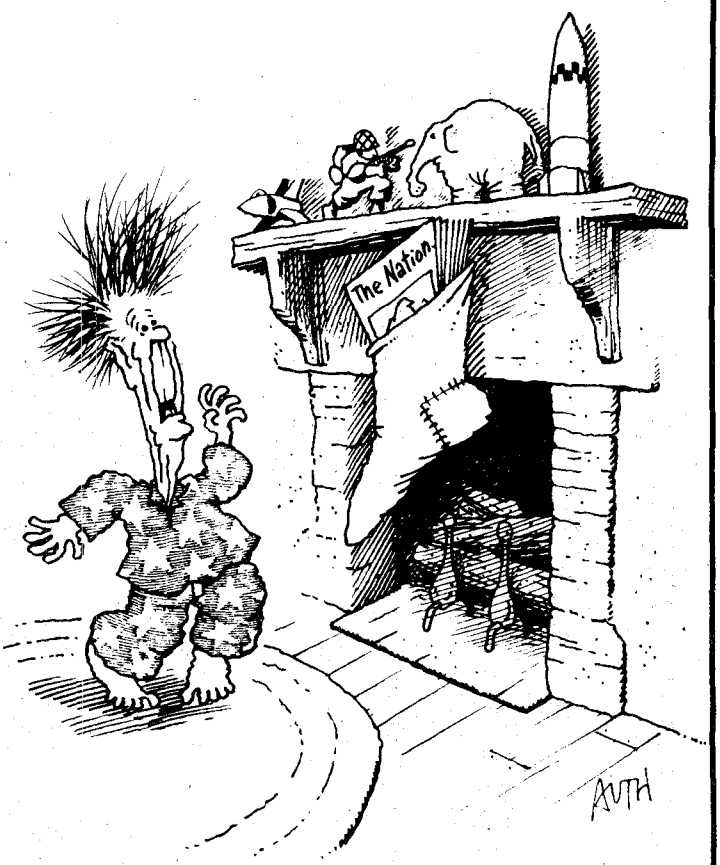

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